THE INCREDIBLE BORGIAS

by KLABUND

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THE *Incredible* BORGIAS

BY KLABUND

Translated from the German by

LOUISE BRINK

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THE INCREDIBLE BORGIAS

[PROLOGUE]

I TRACE these letters in memoriam; I write these words in remembrance; I think these thoughts in the interest of thoughtful reflection; I portray these actions for the sake of later action.

My name is Johannes Goritz. I was born in Luxemburg in the German Empire. My position is that of recorder of petitions. My house upon the Forum of Trajan in Rome stands open to all men of learning and culture. Particularly the Germans who come to Rome do me the honor to visit me. Thus I have had the pleasure of welcoming and entertaining in my household Reuchlin, Copernicus, Erasmus, Ulrich von Hutten, and that monk who at last attained fame or notoriety, Martin Luther. The latter, if I remember correctly, was a hearty eater before the Lord, barbarously fond of a plump capon or rich roast pig. As in general, the monkish and barbaric, the German and the Scythian, were curiously mingled in him and so explain his exaggerated abomination of the

state of things in Rome, this "Babel of wickedness." The earth at that time turned more swiftly on its axis. People easily lost their balance. Comets dragged their tails across the horizon of night. Saturn showed its baleful light. Vesuvius and Stromboli spewed fire. The horrors of war, the struggles in the name of revolution and religion, had no end and humanity no beginning, although every one was talking of humanism. How could Rome alone be expected to keep her moral poise unswerving in this chaos? Was it any wonder that the rock of St. Peter began to sway and the Holy Church was shaken in her foundations?

I have written down with my own hand, in the leisure time permitted me by my extensive official duties, this record in the Latin tongue of the events of Rome in the period of the Borgias. This manuscript was the only one of my possessions which I saved when Rome was plundered A.D. 1527, that year of unhappy memory, in which I lost all that I owned and had, except the strength of my heart and the soundness of my reasoning. Fate led me into closest proximity to that remarkable giant called Alexander Borgia. I had frequent occasion to speak personally in most in-

timate circles with his exceedingly beautiful and charming daughter, Lucrezia, as well as His Highness, the Duke of Romagna, Cesare Borgia, and to form my own opinion of three persons who were at the same time gracious and unlovely, and in whose souls the most opposing elements were united.

Perhaps any one who, for example, should judge Cesare Borgia solely according to his deeds and the pamphlets of his enemies, of whom he possessed a very large number, would make for himself a totally false picture of his external appearance and of his "public character." Cesare Borgia was always a man of especial courtesy, of restraint, and of rare modesty; in short, the ideal image of that which is called virtuoso and courtier. His acts and plans stand upon another page. His personal charm, indeed, his very gentleness, were thoroughly blended with a positive hardness and cruelty. He was always lovable without ever being able to love, and I still remember with what enchantment Machiavelli related to me his meeting with him, which inspired in Machiavelli the idea of his tractate regarding "princes." And this at a time when Cesare Borgia was a mere ruin of himself, for the French disease had made frightful inroads upon

him. Wholly untrue legends are rife concerning Alexander VI, also, the gigantic creator of the Borgia dynasty—for that is what it was—in so far as these have to do with his visible appearance. (Every historical personality has many forms, and often one facet that shines brilliantly will throw a false light upon the entire picture.) No doubt a devil raged within him—but it was never recognizable on the outside. Alexander Borgia was one of the handsomest men of his time, forceful even to his latest hours, of a thoroughly cheerful and harmonious disposition, and averse to all the demons of gloom. He loved his children idolatrously, and his one thought was with full circumspection and without consideration for moral prejudices to increase the power of the Borgias. Everything that he did, he did in full sight of the people; he disguised nothing and I have never seen any one who so scorned the judgment of the world. I have no wish to write an apology for the Borgias, I hold the scales of justice in my hand: may God distribute the weight; it is not my function to pronounce judgment. I am a recorder of petitions: I—record.

[I]

In those times when time was not, when an eternal heaven, the heaven of infinity, burned over Hellas, there lived a man, Ixion.

Emerald-green lizards, fierce adders, locusts, crickets, beetles, sheep, deer, horses, lived with him.

Grass snakes and serpents of Æsculapius hung like costly chains about his neck; the lizards licked the tips of his fingers with their tiny tongues.

But most of all he loved a young wild mare, to which he gave no name. For one who bears a name is already in possession of something that rouses others to gaping, thieving envy.

Having given his mare no name, he hid her from gods and men.

For no one was able to call her.

One day, however, Zeus the God of gods, looking

down from high Olympus, saw the mare drinking in a forest glade.

He swooped down to earth in the form of an eagle.

Scarcely had he reached the earth when he took the body of a stallion.

The mare was frightened and fled before the lustful god. Her nostrils panted, she rushed in terror through woods and fields.

She came to a mountain.

She climbed the rocks like a chamois, through chasm and gorge, close behind her the snorting stallion. Thus she galloped straight up to Olympus. At the top of the mountain the god overpowered her.

Ixion ran lamenting through the groves and meadows from early morning until late at night.

He saw nothing of his beloved mare.

And as he had given her no name he only cried:

Ay! Ay! Ay!

When after a week he had not found the mare, he went mad.

He ran on all fours, ate grass, trod and trampled

upon locusts, crickets, beetles, lizards, and whinnied like a horse.

Zeus heard his neighing.

He lifted him by a wind up to himself on Olympus, drew him to the table of the gods, and took from him the torment of the madness.

He made him his cupbearer.—

As Ixion was washing and rinsing his lord's cup at the fountain in the court of the gods' palace, he suddenly heard a familiar whinny from a stable.

He hastened toward the whinnying and discovered his mare, who overjoyed leaped up to him like a dog and laid both forefeet upon his shoulders.

Furious that Zeus had enticed his mare from him, he resolved to take revenge upon the god, and cast an eye upon Hera, the god's beautiful consort.

One night he stole to her.

But Zeus, the all-knowing, threw a cloud in his way, to which he gave the figure of Hera.

And so Ixion mingled himself in love with the cloud.

The next day at noon Ixion, who supposed he had embraced Hera, advanced to the table of the gods

while they were eating and shouted in triumph: I have possessed Hera, the wife of Zeus!

The gods sprang up in horror.

Zeus turned pale and beckoned two servants.

They put Ixion in fetters and bound him upon the north side of Olympus to an ever-rolling fiery wheel.

[II]

NEPHELE, the cloud, bore a son from Ixion after nine months, who received the name of Centauros.

He was, like his father, early drawn to horses.

He played with the nameless mare in the stable of Zeus and soon learned to ride upon her toward all the four quarters of heaven.

One day he flew upon the mare outside the realm of the gods and came to the regions of men. He won a wife and begat with her seven sons.

His sons, not finding women enough in the wooded hills of Thessaly, united with wild mares.

The mares cast their children in stone quarries and wet ravines: half man, half horse. The upper part of the body was that of a man, the under part that of a horse. The hippocentaurs grew to be wild, lustful creatures.

They fought with beasts, men, demigods. Heracles himself had to measure strength with them in Arcadia.

In their pride and wantonness they attempted to storm even Olympus, the mountain of the gods. The nameless mare showed them the way.

They galloped up the mountain side under cover of the morning mist.

But Zeus, informed by a startled owl, hurled thunderbolts among them, so that they fled in consternation. They sprang down the rocks, and rolling stones crashed behind them. Many necks and backs were broken, and eagles and vultures fed upon their hearts and entrails.

But some of them came to the Mediterranean Sea, plunged into the waves, and swam to other continents: to Africa,

to Sicily.

Two of them with much difficulty reached Spain.

And from them, so it is said, the Borgias are descended.

The Borgias trace their historic origin to the Spanish city Borja, situated not far from Huecha in the province of Saragossa. Eight Borgia knights fought under Don Jayme against the Moors, and in 1238 for the first time resounded the battle cry:

Borgia! Borgia!

In the Cistercian abbey Veruela, which lies at the foot of the Moncayo westward from Borja, the Borgias dedicated to the Holy Virgin their trophies from the war with the Moors: crooked sabers, turbans, girdles, daggers, brooches. The Mooress Noa had treasured one of these brooches.

All eight Borgias had loved her in the wind-swept tent on the hot Tajo, until the last one, filled with jealousy that seven other Borgias had possessed her before him, strangled her while embracing her.

The last rattle in her throat was a sigh:

Borgia! Borgia!

[III]

In the year of disaster 1455, the Spaniard Alfonso Borgia, former privy secretary to King Alfonso of Naples, ascended the Holy Apostolic Throne under the name of Calixtus III. He was seventy-seven years old, afflicted with a chronic disorder of the stomach, and, like all sufferers of this sort, of a sullen, suspicious nature, from which just for a moment a caustic humor would flash forth like a green moon behind black clouds. He was more devoted to the tricks of law than to theology and studied pandects and decretalia more assiduously than the two Testaments. It pleased him to propound subtle legal questions and answer them with still greater subtlety.

As the comet its tail, so Alfonso Borgia dragged behind him to Rome a multitude of Spaniards.

They began to spread themselves in all the streets, palaces, taverns, and to make their importance felt, to speak Spanish and murder the Italian tongue. And

far too often the señors supplanted the signori with the women and the wives. There were evil looks, bad blood, rapiers were drawn under dark arcades; and one day the enraged crowd threw a young Spaniard whom they had caught with a fourteen-year-old beauty of the Ponte quarter without ceremony over the bridge into the Tiber. He managed to save himself upon the opposite shore. It was the twenty-four-year-old Rodrigo Borgia, a nephew of the Pope, a remarkably handsome young man, who, it was said, attracted women to him as the magnet the iron. He had arrived a few days before from Bologna, where he had taken the degree of Doctor of Canonical Law. Still wet and dripping, with clenched teeth, Rodrigo Borgia went to the Vatican, thrust aside the halberds of the Swiss guard, and reached the study of the Pope, who was just then occupied in discovering whether a marriage dispensation would be legally possible in blood relationship of the third degree.

He looked up angrily from his parchments.

Hear me, Uncle, began Rodrigo, continuing to drip, your Roman women are very pretty, but your Roman men cannot take a joke.—

They poured water over your head, did they? bleated the old man.

Jesting aside, Don Alfonso—you are a Borgia and I am a Borgia. All the rest are mere rabble. It behooves us to hold together. I have a proposition to submit to you which occurred to me as I was swimming across the Tiber spitting the dirty water from my mouth and nose. How would it be if you should confer upon me the cardinal's purple?

The Pope opened wide his pale blue eyes—

What, he shrieked, you want to be cardinal? His belly shook under the table with silent laughter. But it seemed as if he was afraid to let his derision appear above the table. For there stood, with brazen mien, not a muscle moving in his handsome face: Rodrigo Borgia, like himself a Borgia, but a man, a wish, a will.

One must display to the mob an iron front, said Rodrigo Borgia. He who yields is already lost. He whose fist crashes upon their face—wins.

All sorts of questions of law were in the Pope's head—he wanted to consult his commentaries, decretalia, and so forth, whether blood relationship—

Rodrigo struck the table with his small, graceful, yet flintlike hand, so that the carved wooden Christ leaped up and down like a puppet:

Only blood relationship, Uncle, justifies this—and everything else. Kinship of blood is the most sacred bond that can bind men. The same blood streams in your veins and mine, Alfonso Borgia. Hear it rushing—

And he tore open his wet shirt and pressed the gray head to his breast, where the old man listened attentively to hear the beating of the Borgia heart.

[IV]

Calixtus III. summoned the Sacred College. The Cardinals Estruteville, Capranica, Bessarione, sought to oppose Rodrigo's election as cardinal.

It was of no use. Calixtus bribed the rest with lucrative benefices and abbacies.

Rodrigo Borgia had hardly taken his seat in the College before he began to dominate his feeble, sickly uncle and all the weak characters of the College. The first thing that he brought to pass was that two other Borgias should receive high ecclesiastical offices: Don Luis Borgia was made Bishop of Segorlia and Lea; Pedro Borgia became prefect of the city of Rome and at once made it hot for the Orsini and Colonna.

Men and women trembled in Rodrigo's presence, and it is said that even the saints in the pictures of the Vatican cast down their eyes when he went gayly by them and in high spirits made over them the sign of the cross.

He read his first Mass when he still barely knew the sacred rites. Where a Latin word failed him he would recite, Borgia! Borgia! in its place. He broke the consecrated wafer too soon and sometimes even carelessly let a piece fall. He celebrated Mass very unwillingly his whole life long and was never scrupulous about the Host. Nor were his Masses ever correct: sometimes the candles were missing; then it was the singers; then the baldachin or the censer; and at times even he himself.

Listen, Uncle, said he to Calixtus, it is very clever of you to give your support to the crusade against the Turks, who after all have done us no harm—for you make yourself and so the name of Borgia popular throughout Christendom—but do not forget to lay a firm and immovable foundation for the dynasty of the Borgias. You have invested me with the prebends of Benevento and Terracina. Fine. I wear the red robe. Good. But I have further ambitions, which look to the office of vice chancellor. It is the highest office next to yours—you are old, forgive me if I remind you of it, but something might happen to you

—you must make our position and our influence secure against all events.

The Pope, who had a glass with a green stomach tincture standing before him, which he loathed, closed his eyelids, devoid of lashes, and pondered over his nephew. Then he opened them.

You are right. I will sign the decree appointing you to-morrow.

Rodrigo Borgia took a step toward him, so that the latter began to be almost afraid: To-morrow? To-day, Uncle, to-day, now, this very moment you will sign the decree which I myself will draft, in order to spare you the trouble of writing. "We Calixtus III . . ."

[V]

Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia and Count Jean d'Armagnac met while hunting with falcons. They lifted their hats and decided to continue hunting together.

It happened at the picnic, when the corks sprang from the wine flasks, that the Count d'Armagnac, much heated from the wine, begged a private interview with the young cardinal, who, too, had imbibed generously of the wine but had remained in full command of his reason. They went aside and leaning each upon a tree stood silent for some time before the count plucked up courage for the first word.

He struck at the leaves of the tree with his riding whip. Whether His Reverence the Cardinal had in any way occupied himself with the nature of love—in the leisure time which his spiritual exercises left him—?

The cardinal smiled courteously:

Certainly, more theoretically of course, more platonically, as became a prince of the Church.

To be sure, to be sure. The count agreed with him. But he had a question precisely in regard to theory, a matter of principle. Namely: how far marriage between blood relations would be permitted by the Church or—so he would express himself—possibly tolerated?

The iris in the cardinal's eyes began to brighten.

Might he ask His Grace the Count whom His Grace wished to marry?

The count had become nearly sober from vexation. He regretted his candor toward the inscrutable Borgia. But it was too late to keep his secret. He dropped his head like a schoolboy surprised in wrongdoing:

I love—my sister.

The cardinal said nothing.

Overhead in the trees was heard the murmuring of the wind.

And in the wind came the shriek of a merlin, a bird of prey.

Hark, said the cardinal, how beautiful, how strong, how honest is the cry of this bird! We men are miserable liars as compared with it.

The count remained dumb. He felt himself scorched

by these brilliant black eyes, whose glance he could scarcely endure.

The cardinal turned the ring with the moonstone on his left hand.

A semiprecious stone—but a good-luck stone. You should procure for yourself and your sister—your beloved—and soon your wife—a moonstone.

The count felt his face growing scarlet.

So you are not going to revile me and despise me for my unnatural love and passion?

The cardinal smiled:

How can that which is in nature be contrary to nature? And you think that you could say a good word to His Holiness, your illustrious uncle, in regard to a dispensation?

He again lowered his brow:

Yvonne expects a child in seven months.

The cardinal moved away from the tree like a sylvan deity stepping forth from its trunk:

Do not be troubled. I myself will prepare for you the bull with the marriage dispensation. You will have the goodness to send to my banker 25,000 ducats, a not inconsiderable portion of which will be due the

secretary of His Holiness, Signore Giovanni di Volterra and a second cardinal to countersign it.

And the signature of the Holy Father?

The cardinal broke into a peal of laughter.

The Holy Father's signature is gratis.

Come, Count, our followers are already wondering where we are.

[VI]

CALIXTUS dies at the age of eighty years.

The enemies of the Borgias, these accursed Catalonian usurpers, breathe freely and live again.

In the palace of the Orsini, who have set themselves to the task of combating the reign of Spanish nepotism, there is a feast of rejoicing, presided over by the lean and haughty Rodolfo Orsini, attended also by members of the Colonna family. At night Orsini receives one of his most trusted servants, a Frenchman by the name of Briconnet.

Briconnet is found stabbed to death the next morning in the Via Giudea.

The attack upon Rodrigo Borgia had failed.

Rodrigo Borgia himself had forestalled it.

When news of the attack got about, many Borgias and Spaniards fled from Rome, deserting their homes, which the mob plundered. Only Rodrigo Borgia did not stir. He went forth with a bodyguard of ten heavily

armed Catalonians and visited Rodolfo Orsini, and chatted with him most delightfully about the Greek manuscripts in the Vatican library.

Pius II. ascended the Papal Throne.

Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia was still in bed when the arrival of a Papal courier was announced to him. Julietta, completely nude, was serving him his chocolate. Corinna, clothed only in a silver veil, was sitting at the edge of the bed.

The Papal messenger, a handsome youth of eighteen from Piedmont, crossed the threshold of the bedroom and stopped.

He tried to squeeze his eyes shut.

Then he looked hard at the ceiling.

But there, too, he found nude female figures weaving in alluring forms to rouse his senses, which made him blush.

Come nearer, my son, said the cardinal.

Julietta laughed.

Corinna smiled.

The courier flushed scarlet.

His Holiness is enjoying the baths of Petriolo?

The courier nodded.

He seemed to have resolved not to say a word.

Julietta and Corinna whispered together and pointed unabashed with their fingers toward the sinewy lad.

The cardinal tore open the letter and read.

Dearly beloved Son! Your Eminence!

It is perhaps a week ago that there was a festival in the gardens of Signor Giovanni de Bichi and a large number of ladies of Siena came there as women of questionable fame to indulge in the presence of Your Eminence in such forms of merry-making as shame forbids me to name more particularly. Your Eminence, little mindful of your exalted office, took part in this un-Christian bacchanal from the seventeenth to the twenty-second hour. To fill up the measure of the disgrace, the husbands, brothers, fathers, and cousins of the young ladies were excluded from participation in the revel that the pleasure of Your Eminence and of a few chosen ones should not be disturbed.—I can hardly find suitable words for my indignation and my displeasure. Here in Petriolo, a bath much frequented

at this time of the year by ecclesiastics and laymen, the licentious conduct of Your Eminence, unworthy of a prince of the Church, has become a daily topic. The clergy are ashamed to be associated with Your Eminence and the laymen judge the life of all priests by your frivolous behavior. Even we ourselves, the Vicar of Christ on earth, are in danger of falling victim to the universal scorn, the mockery and derision of the world, inasmuch as we seem to tolerate the immoral conduct of Your Eminence. The measure of our forbearance is, however, running over, and we pray Your Eminence for the last time to repent and not only to promise penance, but to perform it. Your Eminence has a seat in the councils of the Holy See, for which wisdom, energy, and knowledge assuredly qualify Your Eminence. But may Your Eminence consider how much the authority of the Church is diminished if a master builder, chosen for its support, continues to loosen stones from its walls, and that in the end he will cause the tower itself to fall. Your Eminence is still very young, twenty-nine years, but no longer so young that nothing but lust should be thought of the whole day long. We admonish you

sternly, but in the spirit of a father, and subscribe ourselves

PIUS II.

Petriolo, June 11, 1460

The cardinal had been reading with increasing displeasure, which revealed itself in the angry folds of his brow. When he had finished he threw himself back among the pillows and pondered what he should do. He made all sorts of signs in the air with his right index finger. The courier followed his movements as if he wished to decipher them.

The cardinal's gaze finally fell upon Julietta.

He turned with a jerk to the messenger:

Did you ride, my son, or come with a carriage?

I rode, Your Eminence.

Fine. The horses shall be put to one of my traveling carriages. You shall return by carriage—

Very well, Your Eminence.

With my reply to His Holiness—God Himself has formed it and composed it—there—

And he pointed to the naked Julietta.

Throw a cloak about her—nothing else—and take my

answer with you to His Holiness—but take care that you do not add a postscript in the carriage. God be with you, my son.

And to Julietta, who found no word:

God be with you, my daughter.

[VII]

The sculptor Umberto was working on a statue of Juno.

Rodrigo Borgia saw it in his studio.

He was entranced.

He went about it on tiptoe.

He drew the curtain of the window back and forth in order to study the light and shade.

He stroked it with his hand over its cheeks and breasts and gently caressed the knees.

What do you want for it, Umberto?

Umberto twisted himself in his confusion like an earthworm.

The statue is promised, Your Eminence.

I will pay double.

It is promised—to the original of it.

What—Juno is sitting for you as a model?

The sculptor nodded.

I will pay you threefold—and you may keep the

statue—if you will let me be present at a sitting.

Your Eminence—

There behind the tapestry—above on the platform or—

Some one knocked.

The cardinal sprang behind the tapestry.

Vannozza appeared.

We are alone?

Alone.

She threw off her clothing.

The sculptor, trembling, took up chisel and hammer.

Vannozza became attentive.

What is the matter, Umberto? Are you not well?

Umberto wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

It is hot in the studio to-day.

The tapestry was pushed aside.

Vannozza turned.

Rodrigo Borgia stepped toward her naked like herself.

Would Juno forgive him, if Zeus dared to approach her without first announcing his visit?

And to the sculptor:

Umberto—go—you should procure some fresh clay

—you will have to make a duo in stone: Zeus wooing Juno.

Whiter than the marble, Umberto the sculptor stole from his studio without once looking round.

[VIII]

The cardinal is spattered with blood from head to foot. He looks like a butcher who has clumsily slaughtered an ox. His fat, oily, yet handsome face is drawn between grinning and whimpering.

The soutane is gone, he is thinking, the cloth—from Bontempoli in Milan—was good. But too dear, too dear. I will try once with a small Jewish dealer in remnants in the Via Veneto. The man ought to let me have it at the lowest price. If I save three soldi on a meter, then—

He lost himself in complicated figures. Suddenly his glance fell upon Vannozza, for whom he had been performing obstetrical service. He had established a house for her on the Piazza Prizzi di Merlo, near his palace. Nothing was wanting in its furnishing. Not even a husband. He had married her to Giorgio de Croce, an obliging mercenary gentleman, who, he had purposed, should be the father of his children.—

Vannozza lay upon her bed in deep slumber after suffering her pangs. Doctor and midwife ran hither and thither like two squirrels without a sound on the carpeted floor. In the background at the window sat a Spanish astrologer with his instruments and maps, looked at the heavens, and read the child's horoscope. The midwife had bathed the child. She brought it upon its clean pillow, which she thrust before the father's fat, freckled nose.

—It is a girl, she said.

Rodrigo passed his right index finger over the forehead of the tiny creature and mechanically made the sign of the cross. A girl! he thought. I had expected a boy. One cannot have enough of them. Sons and heirs. Borgias. But let be. Juan and Cesare are already here. It is said that it will be a boy when the man loves more, and a girl when the woman loves more—

He looked from the child over to the mother. What must it be when neither the father nor the mother has loved?

He meditated.

The child distorted its wizened, puckered face still more, so that it now looked as if an invisible hand

was crumpling a packet of parchment paper. Then it suddenly opened its sticky eyes a tiny crack. It seemed to want to test and probe through its lids the large fat man that stood before it.

You are my father? it questioned in astonishment. Did you have any idea of me when you procreated me? Did you want a person of your impure blood—or were you perhaps wishing for something lovely, beautiful, gentle, tender, noble—all the qualities which are alien to you and your family? Did you want to outlive yourself—to blow a breath of eternity into the storm of time—or did I merely slip from you by chance—just as after eating to relieve yourself you let gas escape from your bowels?—

The eyes of the child behind their lids questioned without receiving an answer. They gleamed with an uncertain, silvery light, and it could not yet be determined whether they would be blue, brown, or black eyes.

[IX]

On Cesare's seventh birthday, Rodrigo Borgia appears in his son's room to waken him with a father's kiss.

Adriana Mila, his aunt, brings in a corn cake in which are stuck seven candles, which bear a suspicious likeness to phalli.

Rodrigo is turning a roll of parchment in his hand.

The boy, still overcome with sleep, stretches out his hands for it.

You shall have it, my little son, you shall have it and all that is written on the paper besides.

And Rodrigo Borgia unrolls the parchment and begins to read:

All revenues from the prebends and canonries of the Cathedral of Valencia belong to Signor Cesare Borgia.

—The Signor Cesare Borgia, that is you! said the father proudly and touched the boy lightly on the forehead.—He is appointed treasurer of Cartagena.

The treasurer of Cartagena, that is you. Rodrigo laughs so that his rather fat cheeks shake.

The boy is offended.

Do not laugh, Papa. Life is serious.

Don Rodrigo checks himself, is startled. Then he gently strokes his son with the Papal bull.

You are right, Cesarino, you are seven years old and so wise, so wise. You will go far. He goes and leaves behind the parchment.

The boy leaps out of bed. He is seized with a natural desire. He draws a silver night vessel from under the bed. And as there is no paper at hand, he tears up the Papal bull of Sixtus IV. which had just appointed him treasurer of Cartagena.

[X]

Lucrezia is brought up as prima donna d'Italia by her aunt Adriana together with Julia Farnese, named "the beautiful."

The two young girls are rivals in loveliness and grace. Every night, when the aunt has gone to bed, they stand together naked before the mirror.

They observe how their breasts are beginning to round softly, how their bodies are developing.

Each one is jealous of the other and each one deceitfully praises the other's charms.

Julia says:

What wonderfully beautiful flaxen hair you have, Lucrezia!

Lucrezia says:

How tenderly your breasts curve! They are the two hemispheres of the globe which swell forth from you.

They flash hatred toward each other.

Julia says sharply:

What do you mean by "swell forth"? Am I too plump to suit you?

Lucrezia's lips curl:

O Julia! You are slender like a boy—as slender as Cesare.

Julia grows as red as a lobster:

Then I am too thin, am I?

She turns upon Lucrezia and drags her fingers through the loosened blond hair.

Lucrezia screams and bites Julia in the shoulder, so that the blood runs.

Julia lets go:

You are coarse!

And you are badly brought up.

Precisely as you are—by Aunt Adriana.

They look tearfully at each other.

Then suddenly they smile.

They fall into each other's arms, and each feels blissfully the warmth of the other body.

Lucrezia permitted herself, for diplomatic reasons, at the age of fifteen to be married in absentia, unresist-

ing and even without having seen him, to Giovanni Sforza.

Though he is no Borgia, yet one man is like another. If he bathes once a week, washes his mouth twice a day, and performs his marital duty three times a night, life will be livable with him.

A few weeks after her marriage she was pursued while walking along the right bank of the Tiber by a stately young man, whom she could not escape.

She took refuge in an olive grove.

The youth followed her.

Since he pleased her, she gave herself to him.

She did not discover until later, when he presented himself to her, that it was Giovanni Sforza, her husband, with whom, without knowing it, she had consummated her marriage.

This marriage was not to last long. The reasons which had moved Rodrigo to arrange it were soon no longer existent.

The Sforza could be of no more service to him.

He had deceived himself.

He corrected his mistake at once.

He had the marriage of Lucrezia Borgia and Giovanni Sforza dissolved by a cardinals' college on account of "impotentia cœundi" of the husband.

[XI]

Cesare is destined by his father to a spiritual office, while Juan, the first born, embarks on a worldly, a political career.

Cesare is to study law and theology in Perugia, the chief city of Umbria. The Spaniard Francesco Remolino is sent with him as his tutor.

Cesare makes himself a perfect cortegiano, a man of the world.

He rides, swims, dances.

He reads the Greek and Latin classics, especially Cæsar, Livy, and Herodotus.

He fences with rapier and sword.

He leaps, wrestles, sings.

One must live one's life, so he says to Francesco Remolino, like a beautiful work of art. One leaves disagreeable things to others.

His favorite companion was a misshapen dwarf by the name of Gabriellino, whom he had picked up

along the way on his journey like a nut fallen from a tree.

The nut gave him much to crack:

Your Lordship came to Perugia perhaps to select a burial place for your noble father? Perugia is not at all an unsuitable place in which to be buried.

The young man wrinkled his brow:

What do you mean?

Well, Perugia is the preferred burying ground of the Popes. Innocent III., Martin IV., Benedict XI. lie here in their tombs in the cathedral. The first two even cheek to cheek; that means, dust to dust in the same urn. I have often thought to myself what confusion that will make at the Judgment Day when the trumpets sound. The two Popes will not be able to know their dust apart. Perhaps they will arise as a marvel, a Pope with two heads.

Cesare laughed:

You promised me a pretty girl for the evening. Go fetch her!

The dwarf grinned:

I will present to you a wonderful female creature. Two beautiful sisters—two bodies—and no brain—

two souls—and never a thought. Your illustrious brother, who not for nothing bears the name Don Juan, would—

Silence, interrupted Cesare furiously, not a word of my brother. I do not want to know anything of him. And he tore to pieces a letter of Juan unread, which he had just received.

The dwarf waddled away.

[XII]

Rome, the Eternal City, the Holy City, spreads itself in the valley between the Tiber, the Pincio, and the Capitol.

The streets are narrow, dirty, poorly paved. In rainy weather one sinks without high boots deep in the mud.

The trading houses are situated on the Piazza Giudea. The great merchants and bankers have their homes in the Rione di Ponte. Prelates, booksellers, men of letters, artists, courtesans, dwell in the Rione di Tarione.

The streets are not lighted at night. Luxurious palaces and proud churches rise unexpectedly between damp and wretched houses.

The ruins of the past meet one at every turn.

Geese and goats are feeding upon the Forum. Children are playing tag about the Columns of Trajan. Rome numbers 50,000—the third part of Venice.

Rodrigo Borgia left his palace, which stood between the Bridge of Angels and the Campo di Fiore, through a side door, fully disguised, clad merely in a few rags, but underneath the rags his Toledo dagger. He passed through the Ponte quarter.

He stopped at church doors and begged.

What was the general sentiment of the people—for or against Pope Sixtus IV.?

The Orsini were for him.

The Colonna and Savelli against him.

Hee-hee—and the Borgia?

He crushed his torn Calabrian hat further over his brow.

Here in Ponte, upon Monte Giordano, the Orsini ruled.

Rodrigo Borgia stole around the Torre di Nona and Monte Giordano, where Adriana Orsini lived, like a cat about hot broth.

Vannozza must be protected from the Orsini—but also from the Margana, Palle, Savelli, Cesarini, Barberini.

For her there had to be only Borgias, large and small. She herself existed to bear Borgias. For a family

must be produced, able to lift Rome and all the gates of the world from their hinges. Besides himself, Rodrigo Borgia, the ancestor of the Borgias and creator of a new world, there had already appeared in this life through her assistance and that of God, Juan, Cesare, and Lucrezia Borgia predestined to give it variety and splendor of form and to rule and govern all humbler beings, men and animals: with greatness of heart, boldness, wisdom, beauty, but also with implacable sternness and rigor toward insubordination. No one may revolt against or cast a reflection upon God or Borgia.

Juan! Cesare! Lucrezia! you will be the bearer of the Borgias' banner!

For you, for the fame of the Borgias, I have scratched and scraped and heaped up all my riches. Valencia and Carthago are my bishoprics and send me tribute, and hundreds of abbacies of Spain and Italy. Why have I usurped the office of vice chancellor? That I might collect for you ten thousand gold gulden annually. Ten thousand gold gulden, he muttered to himself and turned his hat for alms before Santa Maria del Popolo.

Then he entered an osteria—one of the inns of which Vannozza still from her former days had the lease.

He drank several quarts of Barberino and then began to bawl:

Vannozza is a whore. How does she live, hey? From whoredom with this—and he spit three times—so-called Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, a damned, so strike me God, Spanish intriguer. They will come to no good end—neither she nor he. Why does not her highly respectable husband, Signor Giorgio de Croce, run the cold iron between his ribs?

Rodrigo Borgia drew his dagger from under his rags and brandished it.

If I ever meet this—he spit again—Borgia alone, I will tickle his vitals with this bit of a knife. The rascal will have cause to remember me—

From all sides of the room there was a Psst! Psst! Psst!

He screamed so loudly that they heard him in the street.

Every one shall hear, he shrieked, that Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia is a scoundrel and Vannozza the whore of whores. Everybody. Do you think that she

deceives her worthy husband only with this Borgia? You are wrong! We have the Spanish Señors Juan López, Marades, and Taranza, who have intercourse with her—hee-hee, have intercourse— Also many a male offshoot of the noble families of the Barberini, Cesarini, Orsini, Torcari, may already have struck root in her. . . .

Now that is enough, you scandalmonger, yelled the towering host of the tavern. You will bring my highly respected inn into ill repute with all good citizens with your horrible bellowing. What do I care for Vannozza and the Cardinal Borgia? Out with you!

And he seized Rodrigo Borgia around the hips and flung him out upon the pavement, where for some seconds he lay like one dead, then hobbled to his feet, and did not resume his usual sauntering gate until he had turned several corners.

[XIII]

Rodrigo Borgia sits on his firm and plump bottom under five Popes upon the seat of the vice chancellor. He is not to be put down.

He squats like a brooding duck—he is hatching the future of the Borgias—he sits and waits.

The Humanist Pius II. tries by letter to convert the Sultan Mohammed to Christianity, and dies.

Hee-hee—

The vain Paul II. understands little Latin, collects coins and pictures, in order not to be behind the Medici, and dies.

Hey-hey—

The irascible Sixtus IV. builds the Sistine Chapel, conducts wars, even with Florence and the Medici, who seem to be invincible, and dies.

Ho-ho—

Rodrigo Borgia begins to pay attention. Sixtus is a man who is no longer exactly in accord with the

ecclesiastical side of the Papacy. He stamps upon it a wholly political character.

Rodrigo Borgia looks around with apparently sleepy eyes: for fellow cardinals who might be of assistance to him.

He does this or that "favor" to this or that one: presents him with a pearl, a Persian carpet, a benefice, and promises him a thousandfold.

This Innocent VIII., ha-ha, will scarcely live forever! A miserable cowardly cur, but he shows how one must proceed. He grants absolution and pardon even for murder and homicide, if there is proper payment.

He dies.

Rodrigo stands at his deathbed and feels that his time has come.

He closes the dead man's eyes.

He holds himself erect as he leaves the dead. It seems to all as if he has suddenly grown. His eyes flash fire.

The conclave begins.

Rodrigo Borgia is a Spaniard.

Most of the Italian cardinals are of the opinion that the tiara belongs to an Italian.

They are against the "foreigner."

Three scrutinies of the ballots have already been made without a positive result.

The decision appears to lie between Cardinal Costa and Cardinal Caraffa. There was betting upon it. Even Borgia himself laid heavy stakes in secret. Upon himself.

Suddenly the Borgia emerges golden from a dark background. He goes from one cardinal to another and bears upon his hands all the wealth of the world, ready to scatter it among them. He is the Great Tempter. He leads them to the hills about Rome and shows them Rome, shows them Italy, shows them the world. You, Orsini, will obtain the bishopric of Cartagena. You, Colonna, the abbacy Subiaco. Savelli, my friend, you deserve the Cività Castellana and the bishopric of Maiorca. The diocese of Pamplona, splendid as its name, is kept for you, Pallavicini. Riario, Sanseverino, you will all come into your own! You, Ascanio Sforza, you are the noblest, most influential, the most worthy; I will shower you with gold and favor—when once the tiara adorns my head. You shall have my own palace, my lucrative and comfortable office

of vice chancellor, the diocese of Erleu, which will yield you at least 10,000 gold ducats—and many other benefices—

Thus the Borgia went from one to another and obtained fourteen votes.

Fourteen votes!

He is jubilant! Only one single one is lacking—and I shall be Pope, the papa di Roma, a Borgia the Vicar of Christ on earth, a Borgia becomes God!

But to whomever else he went: Piccolomini, Zeno, the young Giovanni di Medici, whom he almost loved—they turned their backs upon him.

Caraffa and Costa, the candidates whose prospects were the most auspicious at the beginning of the conclave, had their expectations dashed when the tiara slipped from their hands, and they would have nothing to do with him.

At last there remained but one man who was uncertain upon which side he should cast his vote. He was Cardinal Gherardo, ninety-five years old.

Rodrigo Borgia stood before him and looked into the hawk eyes tense with greed, which gazed out at him from a mass of parched skin.

The man is old, thought Rodrigo Borgia, very old. He has already feathered his nest. Of what use could a few prebends and benefices be to him? None whatever. It is not worth while to offer them to him. He would mock at them. Is he a lover of art? A fine painting—a statue— He gave up this idea. This old, half-dead man must be promised something alive. Life itself. And who was life itself? Who else than a young woman, a young girl? A piece of blooming flesh. A rosy mouth. A pair of twining arms. Two budding breasts. The Cardinal Borgia drew the Cardinal Gherardo to him and whispered in his ear: If you will give your most highly esteemed vote in the conclave to-day, then to-morrow, shortly after midday . . .

The rest was lost in Gherardo's ear, and the words became audible again as Rodrigo Borgia concluded: So help me God!

The old man's hawk eyes sparkled toward Borgia. His thin, knifelike lips whistled like the piping of a bird:

Amen.

[XIV]

Early in the morning of August 11, 1492, the window of the conclave room sprang open.
Rodrigo Borgia had been chosen Pope as Alexander VI.
Alexander VI. announced at once that he would give a new altar and an organ to Santa Maria del Popolo, his protectress and guide.
The folk applauded. He dispensed his solemn blessing from the benediction loggia urbi et orbi:
My blessing upon the city.
My blessing upon the land.
My blessing upon Italy.
My blessing upon the world.

About two o'clock, after the midday meal, while the August sun brooded without and within the palace every one had lowered their window blinds and gone to sleep,

Lucrezia Borgia, the Pope's daughter, passed
through the dark passages of the Vatican,
through which here and there golden-green lights flashed,
to the apartments of Cardinal Gherardo.
She went quietly, with soft but firm footsteps.
She hesitated only a moment before the door and then went in without knocking.
The aged cardinal raised himself from his reclining chair. A purple color rushed even to his brow, to be succeeded immediately by a deathly pallor.
He raised his eyelids once more with an effort to look upon the marvelous being, this miracle of girlhood before him.
She had thrown about her merely a small brocade mantle, which scarcely reached to her knees.
She opened it and stood naked before him.
There she bloomed, the most beautiful flower of nature: a blossoming woman. A rosy mouth. Two budding breasts.
Once more he lifted his arms.
Then his knees gave way.
He fell back into his leather chair.

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His head struck heavily upon the edge of the table. Lucrezia's eyes at first opened in slight astonishment. Then she drew her mantle about her and stepped to the dead cardinal. She closed his eyes with a light, almost tender, movement of the hand.

She made over him the sign of the cross, helped herself from the sweets which lay in a small silver dish upon the table, evidently intended for her, and went with soft but firm footsteps as she had come.

[XV]

Alexander VI. is beside himself for joy. He has won the highest game by playing the highest stakes.

We are on the march, we Borgias. On the march, God, to Thy throne. We have already climbed the first rungs of Jacob's ladder.

Now it is upward, upward without a stop, through clouds and winds, storm and hail, lightning and stars: to Thee, for Thou art the Father in heaven,
and the Father of the Borgias.

If a son of God shall again descend to earth to redeem mankind, he will be a Borgia.

Cæsar made Rome great, but now Alexander
raises it boldly to its supreme height; a man, he—
Alexander, a god.

Thus did the Pope exult and blaspheme.

I will make Juan the temporal ruler of Italy. Cesare shall soon obtain the cardinal's hat and some day succeed me as Pope. I will make the Papal Throne heredi-

tary. It shall belong for all future time to the Borgias. Cesare must be the third Borgia Pope.

Feed the doves, child, said he to Lucrezia, who stood near him upon the balcony of the Vatican and was looking down into St. Peter's Place, where a dog and a bitch, which had just been loving, could not separate themselves and had already begun to hate—feed the doves! The dove is the mystic bird of the Holy Trinity! We must give it something to peck at.

The bull is the heraldic animal of the Borgias. Pinturicchio has to paint frescoes in the dwelling rooms of the Pope which shall represent the processions of the Apis bulls. Rodrigo Borgia, now Pope Alexander VI., arranges in honor of his election and for the pleasure of the Italian people

and the rabble

a corrida,

a bullfight,

in the ruins of the Colosseum, which becomes the Plaza de Toros.

I am a Spaniard, says the Pope. I will no longer miss my Spanish amusements. I have had to be without

long enough. I will give the Romans a festa di Borgia. Cesare Borgia, his son, walked to the stands as toreador, in Spanish costume, with lowered sword, and the hearts of the beautiful women beat more rapidly as he passed by.

Che belleza!

Lucrezia flung yellow roses at him.

She sat at the left of the Pope in a magnificent loge hung with red velvet. Next him on the right sat Julia Farnese, in her beauty of nineteen years, which inflamed him to madness. She still refused herself to him. The Pope had already had recourse to the mandragora, to a love potion which his own physician had obtained from a mandrake root pulled from the earth by a black dog in the light of the full moon. But the potion had thus far had no effect.

Lucrezia turned to the Pope:

Hear me, Papa di Roma e Papa di Borgia, I am so sorry for the bull. Let him have a cow once more before his death. He will then die easier.

The Pope laughed.

Julia blushed.

Thy will be done—as in heaven so also upon earth.

He had three cows driven into the arena and the maddened, raging bull rushed at all three of them.

The gallery roared.

Julia kept her eyes closed.

The cows were then driven out and the picadors rode into the arena. They prodded the bull from their horses with short thrusts of their lances, so that the bull, snorting, rushed upon them with lowered horns. A crowd of banderilleros came on foot; they thrust the banderillas provided with barbed hooks into the bull's already quivering and bleeding flesh. With the swarm of banderilleros came swarms of flies, which crawled into the animal's wounds or buzzed and whirled around it.

Capeadors sought by swinging red cloaks to divert the bull from a picador in danger.

Too late.

The bull had already bored its horns into his horse's belly and threw horse and rider like balls into the air. It picked up the picador with its lifted horns, pressing them into the picador's back. Then it dashed him into the sand, which began to grow red in color.

A cry of horror broke from the public,—then Cesare Borgia came running.

He carried a stick in his left hand, from which fluttered a scrap of red cloth and with which he led the bull hither and thither in a zigzag line.

In his right hand he held firmly the espada.

As the furious beast stood directly before him and lowered its horns, Cesare suddenly pierced it between the horns with the sword.

The bull swayed and tumbled.

It lifted its head and looked with glassy eyes into the glaring sun.

It felt once more the beneficent warmth of the celestial body, then eternal darkness broke in its eyes.

It fell heavily, crushed by the giant hand of death, and lay flat upon the ground.

Cesare lifted his sword and saluted the Papal box.

Lucrezia was white with fear.

The Pope had arisen in the excitement of the struggle. Now he clapped his hands like one possessed, and all the people joined in the applause.

The next day Cesare, in opposition to the will of the

Collegium, was decorated with the cardinal's purple, although he had never been consecrated.

Cesare went to the barber:

Shear me a tonsure! But not too great! So that I can soon let it grow again!

[XVI]

JULIA, the beautiful one, loved Orso, the one-eyed, the son of Adriana.

When the Pope learned of it, he arranged a magnificent wedding for them and His Holiness married them himself.

He appointed Alexander Farnese, Julia's brother, cardinal. In popular speech he soon came to be called Cardinal Fregnese.

The Pope had the young people take up their abode in the palace San Martinelli, which stands close to the Vatican. A gate opened from it into the Vatican gardens.

One night when the moon was full, without mandrake root and black dog, Julia in her young womanhood gave herself to Alexander the aging man.

Orso the one-eyed, became blind.

Alexander Borgia had Julia Farnese borne as a living saint in the reliquary in the solemn procession.

Alexander Borgia had lost faith in the mandragora and resolved in the future as formerly to trust solely in himself and refuse to believe in any other agency. While the people of his time were slaves to superstition, Alexander Borgia from now on took delight in boldly defying all the demons of the world below and the world above.

His bedchamber hung full of stuffed birds of ill omen, full of owls, cuckoos, bats.

A white rose, the funeral flower, lay every night upon his pillow.

He liked to eat in a company of thirteen persons. The knives, forks, and spoons at the table were laid crosswise over one another. At the beginning of the meal he would in apparent heedlessness spill wine upon the tablecloth.

He was pleased when cats ran across his path.

And was glad if he met a pretty nun.

He usually took her at once with him into the Vatican, or if he was too far away, he went with her into the nearest church to enjoy himself with her in a side gallery.

The German Dr. jur. et theol. Johannes Burcardus

from Hasslach near Strassburg wrote a pamphlet concerning the new Pope in simple German, which found the widest circulation in Germany and secured many friends for the Pope.

"The new pope is a man of great mind and great wisdom. He is a follower of Pope Calixtus, his late kinsman of blessed memory, virtuous in prudence and of upright life. In him are graciousness, trustworthiness, devoutness, and familiarity with all those things which properly belong to such an exalted station. We hope that he will be for the advancement and service of Christianity everywhere and will pass safely over the perilous rocks of the sea and attain to celestial glories."

Johannes Burcardus was at once summoned by the Pope to the Papal Court to become scribe in the office of Papal ceremonies and to be master of court ceremonies.

The writers, he said to Cesare, are the ones who make fame.

Johannes Burcardus was a most devoted and obedient servant of the Pope and kept a simple, honest, German diary of the daily occurrences at the Vatican.

He liked to eat and drink well, especially red wine, and acquired besides the favor of the Pope a dark red Barberino nose and the nickname of John the Toper. But the Pope did not trust him in affairs of particular importance and discretion. In such cases, Alexander Borgia would dictate to him two, three letters opposite in content and leave him in ignorance which one he finally sent.

[XVII]

A FEW days after he had been elected Pope, Alexander bade Cesare and Lucrezia to come to him in his castle of Nepi.

He sent away all the servants for one afternoon, and no one remained in the house but the three Borgias. They sat in the great hall about the large table, upon which lay the map of Italy, a globe, and a skull.

There was no one to hear them but the thick walls. A sunbeam fell through the small window upon Lucrezia's head, which shone brightly.

Alexander and Cesare regarded her with great satisfaction.

A green Spanish fly was dancing in the sunbeam.

When the Pope read the first official Mass, the most beautiful women of Rome mounted with him to the stalls of the canons of St. Peter. I do not want to see the priests, these gray ravens, too close to me: they

also smell badly, the unwashed holy men; much more pleasing to me and God are the fragrant Julia Farnese, my most dearly beloved, my Madonna, whom I will have painted, I myself lost in adoration before her; Lucrezia, my little daughter; and all the other charming redbreasts, nightingales, and humming birds.

They twittered and giggled and laughed into his Mass.
They smiled upward, he downward,
and Julia Farnese threw a kiss into his Amen.

Among the congregation which filled the church and looked upon the Mass partly in astonishment and partly in horror, was the Florentine monk, Fra Girolamo, who during the impious actions fell to the floor in a swoon and had to be carried out into the open by his neighbors. They left him lying between the columns of the vestibule.

When he awoke, and believed he had awakened from a crazy dream,
he stood up
and leaned against a pillar.

The tears ran down his cheeks as he once more came to himself, and he embraced the pillar and kissed it.

O Pillar! How glad I am that you are not a human being! Do you also rejoice because of it! You have no eyes to see the shame of Rome and of the world. You have no heart with which to feel the anguish of this life.

O Stone, O cool Stone, O kindly Stone! Cool my heated brow, behind which the fever rages and the longing to be Samson that I might rend you and all the pillars of this church upon me, that St. Peter's might crash in ruins upon the Pope and all his Popish train!

But ah—groaning he pressed the column to his breast —I am too weak.

Too weak and too cowardly.

[XVIII]

Audience with the Pope.

In a long line, led by Burcardus, master of court and ceremonies, a dry, phlegmatic man, who was incapable of wonder and who allowed all the events of life to pass before him with equal unconcern—

and so, likewise, this procession of humanity:

there passed by and kissed in Turkish fashion the floor beneath the feet of His Holiness—priests, nuns, knights, peasants, women, ladies, harlots.

Upon the latter the Pope's eye dwelt with especial satisfaction.

He spoke a few words with one and another of them in a half-audible tone, called each one Magdalena, and appointed her to come to the Vatican: one at four, another at five, the third at six.

One cannot endure too much of any one thing. Variety gives charm to one's fare. A small woodcock, a tiny chicken, a dainty pigeon! That tastes good. But

three pigeons—they would ruin any one's stomach. Last in line, the Pope was already about to withdraw, the Florentine monk, Fra Girolamo, approached him. He did not cast himself to the ground as did the others. He did not kiss the hem of the Pope's garment or his sandals.

He remained standing and in his blazing eyes there burned more of a challenge than a wish.

The Pope cleared his throat:

Yes—so—you are the last. What do you wish, my son?

The monk replied:

You are the first—and consider—think what you are doing.

The Pope:

Do you wish to enter into a philosophical discussion with me? I have no time—my high office—

You have no time—and want to seize and grasp eternity, which consists of nothing but time and time and time? One must have time in order to have eternity.

The monk spoke in a singing, melodious cadence, which began to lull the Pope.

Yes, I hear, said the Pope, I hear. And he heard the

plashing of the Roman Fountain in the Vatican garden.

Do you know, continued the monk, how deeply you have degraded your high office?

So deeply, thought the Pope, so deeply—he was moved in a strange manner to acquiesce unresistingly in the charges of the monk.

You obtained the tiara through shameful simony—through the buying of votes— Oh, shame to the cardinals who let themselves be bought! You deal in cardinals' hats like a cap maker, in bishops' staves like a carpenter. You commit fornication with all the harlots of Rome, and at night the Devil sleeps with you in woman's form. You scatter the cursed seed of the Borgias to all the four quarters under heaven. Unnumbered and innumerable are your daughters and sons. You lust also to seduce them, daughters and sons; you gratify your desires not only with women—even young boys and monks and goats and hens are sought after by you. There stands a young mare in your stable, she is bathed in milk and rubbed down with wine.

It is your beloved.

Borgia! Borgia! Descend from the throne you have usurped and render once more to God the Lord and Ruler the honor which is His due. Surrender of your own will what your greed for gold and for power has arrogated to itself. Go with Cesare, with Lucrezia, and those who belong to you, of your own accord into exile. Then may an ecumenical council determine its will regarding the desolated Papal See and appoint a worthy successor of Peter.

The Pope had arisen from his chair.

Then he fell upon his face before the monk and kissed the hem of his cassock.

Oh—what a wonderful feeling was in him—how sweet to be humbled for once—to taste the delight of abasement, to be trodden upon, reviled, and spit upon,

like Christ at one time, when he dragged his own cross to the place of execution.

Yes, trample me under foot, he cried to the monk, spit upon me, scourge me with rods and thorns. I will do what you say. Will go from here, flee into the wilderness. Raise your fist and let it resound upon my tonsured head like a hammer. I will be your anvil.

Spittle ran from the corners of his mouth.

He felt as if he were near salvation—ah—now—now—

Apage, Satan! shrieked the monk in terror, made the sign of the cross, and fled.

He did not see that the Pope had arisen and was laughingly shaking his clenched fist after him.

Lucrezia met the monk in the corridors of the Vatican, where he was wandering around.

He could not find the way out—

not out of the Vatican—

and not out of the twisted paths in his soul.

She stopped him:

Where do you want to go? To the Holy Father?

I come from him.

Yes, and now?

He was dumb.

Her beauty burned like a torch in the dim light before him.

Might you not also pay your respects to the unholy daughter of the Holy Father?

She smiled at him.

In this smile there was compliance, even before he had made a request, fulfillment even before desire, love even before longing. She looked quickly up the passage to left and right.

Come—and she drew the unresisting man into a side chamber, which was full of rubbish: old paintings, commodes, banners, plaster casts.

She bolted the door.

He saw in the half darkness a white nude figure before him.

It was a plaster cast of a statue which Umberto had made of Lucrezia.

Do you want the stone, smiled Lucrezia, or do you want me? You may choose!

O Stone, O cool and kindly Stone!

And he buried his head in the lap of the stone Lucrezia.

[XIX]

On Annunciation Day the Pope took part in the solemn procession of cardinals, prelates, and patricians to Santa Marìa sopra Minerva.

He celebrated High Mass, and according to ancient custom he bestowed a dowry upon a hundred and fifty poor girls.

They had to pass by Alexander after the solemn transaction had been completed: a procession of sorrow, of suffering, of ugliness, and of beauty.

Alexander reviewed them very attentively.

He appointed the five most beautiful of them to a private audience in the Vatican.

Upon the return home, the Jews awaited the Pope at the Tiber bridge, bowing and cringing. They had crept like moles from the dark corners of their ghetto. They stood there crowded close together, whispering and buzzing.

As the Pope came riding over the bridge, they all threw themselves to the earth before him.

The oldest of the Jews, a certain Ephraim, stepped forward and presented him with the roll of the Hebrew law, the Pentateuch, bound in gold.

He pleaded in servile, whining words that the Pope would ratify for the Jews the law of Moses.

The Pope took the roll, contemplated the gold for a moment with pleasure, hesitated, spoke:

Confirmamus, sed non consentimus—and let the roll fall into the dust.

He then rode on.

In the afternoon of the same day the Jews had to run a race with horses, donkeys, buffaloes.

The course was from Arco Domiciano to the Church of San Marco.

Many of the Jews were first made drunk or stuffed full like fattened geese, so that during the race they began to vomit and defecate.

The Pope sat at the goal by the San Marco Church and laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

The first prize, a piece of red cloth, was won by a Jew who had clung to the tail of a horse and shortly

before reaching the goal had leaped upon the horse and over the horse's neck, so that he came in first. He was permitted, while the Pope was in a gracious mood, to kiss his foot.

A child was born in the Vatican, but the name neither of its father nor of its mother was divulged without. It received in holy baptism, which the Pope himself administered, the pagan name Narcissus, and among the people it was soon called the Roman Infant.

The child enjoyed the favor and affection of all the Borgias.

Lucrezia often held it in her arms, carried it around in the garden, and played with it.

Cesare stood still when he met it with its nurse and passed his small hand almost lovingly over the child's tender, downy head.

The Pope himself, as the boy grew older, crept on all fours with him about the floor, let him ride upon him, and cut crossbows and arrows for him from willow rods, with which the small Narcissus shot at the images of the saints and transformed many a St. Paul and St. John into a St. Sebastian.

The rumor soon got about among the people of Rome that the mysterious Roman Infant was the son of Lucrezia, offspring of her incestuous union with Alexander or Cesare. For, it was whispered about, she maintained an unnatural love relationship with both of them; the Spanish blood raged and burned in the Borgias to the boiling point and drove them to one another like the ardent bull to the heated cow. And so beyond measure was their consuming desire that they found fulfillment and satisfaction only among themselves. So that only a Borgia could thoroughly love a Borgia.

[XX]

About this time Lucrezia was to be married to the illustrious Signore Gasparro of the house of Proscida. There were all sorts of rumors as to the manner in which the plan for this marriage came about, and that Lucrezia had thrown a dagger at her father. These rumors furnished the material for the first important pamphlet directed against the Borgias, which found circulation in brochures in Rome, Naples, Florence, and even as far as Germany and France. The title read:

IDYLL IN THE VATICAN

An Amusing Tragedy

by

one who has no desire

to be

named and—hanged

GARDEN OF THE VATICAN

Lucrezia in a swing. Her governess Julia. Alexander Borgia sits at a stone table with all kinds of documents in front of him; goose quills. He writes, casts up accounts, eats meanwhile from a basket of cherries.

Alexander (looking up): You should not swing so immodestly, Lucrezia - - you have almost nothing on - - you are in fact half naked.

Lucrezia: The nymphs - - were still more naked - - - -

Alexander: You are right - - but then nakedness was natural and at that time the young girls were not yet intent upon seducing their brothers and even their fathers.

Lucrezia: What does that mean?

Alexander: That means, what it means - - - -

Lucrezia: (swings): I fly - - fly - -

Julia: Up to heaven - -

Lucrezia: Down to hell - - - -

Alexander (looking up): What does that mean?

Lucrezia: That means, what it means - - - -

Alexander: Won't you explain it to me?

Lucrezia: Why?

Alexander: One does not answer a question with another question - - - -

Julia (to Lucrezia): Your Highness behaves most unbecomingly toward His Holiness - - - - un - - be - - com - - ing - - ly - - - -

Lucrezia: Don't bite off your tongue, Julia - - - -

Alexander: If you do behave badly toward me, I beg of you to learn to conduct yourself differently toward your instructress.

Lucrezia (swings).

Alexander: What did you mean a little while ago, about hell?

Lucrezia: That we shall all reach there sometime - - - -

Alexander: Who - - we all?

Lucrezia: We Borgias - - at the head, His Holiness Pope Alexander the Sixth - - - - (swings).

Julia: I - - have - - never - - heard - - such - - talk - - May His Holiness not blame a poor Piedmont woman for the shockingly bad manners of Her Highness. At times I am powerless.

Alexander: We all are toward this . . . creature - - - -

Lucrezia: It was His Holiness who - - - - made me, he should have made me different - - - -

Julia: Lucrezia - - you are a devil - -

Lucrezia: So much the better, then I shall not have to become one - - - - like - - - -

Alexander: Like?

Julia: Now - - ?

Lucrezia (jumps from the swing): Like Cesare. (To Alexander) Will Your Holiness give me a few of your cherries - - I like them best slightly decayed - - are they poisoned? I hope not (spits a cherry stone into Julia's face).

Julia: Your Holiness - - I pray most fervently to be released from the Papal service - - my dignity is here trodden under foot in a most unqualified manner - - - -

Alexander (looks at Lucrezia): Under very pretty feet - - -

Lucrezia: Come, Julia, be sensible and remain here. Do you mean that you want to leave our service? Do you think that you would return alive to Piedmont? Then you do not know us well. You know too much about us, Julia, not to have it in your power to be a menace to us with our enemies. His Excellency Cesare Borgia and His Holiness there at the table would not let you go far. At the very first Tiber bridge a re-

grettable accident would overtake you - - can you swim? Of course not. Stay with me, Julia. I am giving you good advice. I do treat you badly, but at least I permit you to live. Yes, I even like you. Because I like you, I have to torment you. But in order that I may plague you, I must have you alive (strokes her). Don't cry, Julia (reaches again into the basket of cherries).

Alexander: For your youth you speak quite presumptuously - - - -

Lucrezia: Shall I wait until I am as old as His Holiness? I hope by that time to be less presumptuous.

Alexander: Into whose hands shall I give you really that you shall learn restraint? Those of some man?

Lucrezia: Your Holiness was man enough to make me. Your Holiness should also be man enough to - - - - restrain me.

Alexander (takes off his cap and wipes his bald spot): No - - no - - Lucrezia - - at that time, when I made you, I could manage you - - since then, may God punish me, no more.

Lucrezia: Yes, God has punished you. With Cesare and with me.

Alexander: Have you ever thought of getting married?

Lucrezia: Often.

Alexander: To whom, if one may ask?

Lucrezia: To Cesare - -

Alexander: To Cesare? Are you entirely out of your senses? Cesare is your brother - - - -

Lucrezia: Well - - and why not? He pleases me better than any other man.

Alexander: No compliment for me. Take care that you do not tell him that. He is already conceited enough and sufficiently enamored of his own greatness without that - - - -

Lucrezia: Your Holiness is not without vanity either. I believe that we Borgias should remain quite by ourselves - - we ought also to have children solely from one another - - Borgias - - nothing but Borgias - - not a drop of strange blood should be mingled with ours - - I do not love Cesare - - I do not love His Holiness - - but other people - - them - - them I hate - - yes, I hate them - - and the more of them exterminated the better. Would not Your Holiness for my sake start a small war? There is still money in the safe, and if

there is money - - for it men will be found who will permit themselves to be killed - - let Your Holiness give me a few thousand ducats and I myself will make war - - - - I know that Your Holiness is avaricious - - - - let Your Holiness *lend* me the money - - - - I will repay it with the plunder - -

Alexander: You are terrible, Lucrezia - - and you do not know it - - - -

Lucrezia: Your Holiness is suffering moral qualms? Oh, oh! Your Holiness is becoming forgetful.

May I remind you?

Alexander (puts his hands to his ears): Stop - - - -

(Cesare comes.)

Cesare: Did you sleep well, Old Man? Good morning, Lucrezia - - - -

Alexander: I slept badly - - this - - - child here gives me so much concern that I lie awake nights by the hour.

Cesare: Our little Lucrezia? But, Lucrezia, you should not cause Papa so much anxiety - - - -

Lucrezia: If I caused His Holiness no concern, some one else would. It is all one and the same thing. His Holiness is a hypochondriac.

Alexander: She does not take me seriously, Cesare. A child that does not take its father seriously. Horrible! The world is ripe for destruction.

Lucrezia: We Borgias at any rate are doing all we can to make it ripe for that.

Cesare: If she does not take you seriously, Papa, you should not do her the honor of taking her seriously.

Alexander (querulously): Not to take her in earnest - - means to take her as comical - - and that would be only to please her still more - - for she would think up the craziest things under the pretext that it was all intended for fun. She will in the end bewitch all the cardinals or bribe them - - they will choose her Pope - - the Popess Lucrezia - - my election will be declared invalid - - she will yet bring us all into our graves - - - -

Cesare: If we do not contrive to bring her to her grave first - - - -

Lucrezia (laughs).

Alexander: Stop laughing!

Lucrezia (smiles).

Alexander: Stop smiling! This complacent smiling makes me very nervous.

Lucrezia: Your Holiness should consult your personal physician in regard to your nervousness.

Alexander: Cesare - - listen to this - - the Chief Shepherd of the Christian flock has to submit to such treatment from the least of his sheep.

Cesare: Lucrezia - - you ought to be whipped.

Lucrezia (like a flash, snatches his dagger from its belt): You dare! (Sets the dagger at his throat, flings the dagger away.)

Alexander: She must marry. Her blood is too hot.

Cesare: You are right. There are only two things to do: poison her - - or get her married.

Alexander: Here - - here is the list of patricians in Rome and outside of Rome - - I was at the moment going through it to see whether or not one or another of them could be assessed for a higher contribution to the Papal See. - - Who might be considered as a husband for Lucrezia: A Barberini? A Malatesta? A Sforza - - we have already had him - - a Medici - - they have come down in the world - - an Orsini - - they are on ill terms with us - - a Colonna - - ditto - - an Este - - might be worth while - - an Aragon - - would not be so

bad, related to the royal house of Naples - - a Rovere - - a Proscida - - - -

Lucrezia (has picked up the dagger again): I will make a suggestion. We will have the judgment of God upon it. Cesare, fasten the list of nobles there upon the tree - -

Cesare: What for?

Lucrezia: You will see. Va bene. So, and now I will throw the knife at the list and the one I hit - - I will marry.

Cesare: Suppose he is already married?

Lucrezia: His Holiness will in the fullness of his Apostolic power dissolve the first marriage and grant his benediction to the second one - - - -

Alexander: She makes use of me as if I were but a beast - - - -

Lucrezia: A beast - - - - that you are - - - - (throws the dagger and strikes Alexander, who is standing near the tree, in the breast).

Alexander: Help, I am murdered! (Sinks unconscious to the ground.)

Cesare: Lucrezia!!

Lucrezia (runs to Alexander, kneels): Is he dead? Is

he dead? Oh, how I hate him, who thrust me into this life - - without asking me if I wanted to be his daughter - - O God in heaven - - if Thou art - - and if Thou hearest the cry of a Borgia - - and dost not stop Thine ears to it - - O let him be dead - - let him no more awake to new deeds of shame and fresh abominations - - Oh, I am already hung thick with sorrows as with strings of pearls - - I am wholly wretched, God, utterly wicked, because he is so wicked who has made me evil - - he came to me last night - - he came stealthily to me on his fat soles - - me - - me he wanted to rape - - his daughter - - O, Cesare, Brother, how I called for you and wished that you were my husband to run your sword through his thick belly - - Cesare - - help me now - - he is not dying - - he is only pretending to be in a swoon - - he is only feigning his weakness to deceive us - - to make sport of us - - as he makes sport of all persons - - - -

Alexander (feebly): Cesare - - - -

Lucrezia: He lives - - - -

Cesare: Father - - - - ?

Alexander: What has happened to me?

Cesare: Nothing - - nothing bad - - Lucrezia will at

once call the doctor - - the dagger has merely entered the upper part of the breast - - above the heart - - a few days' rest - - and everything will be as before - - - -

Lucrezia: And everything will be as before - - - -

Alexander: How did the dagger come into my breast? Are there assassins in the palace?

Cesare: No assassins! Only good friends - - - -

Alexander: And who threw the dagger?

Lucrezia: I - - - -

Cesare: Yes - - Lucrezia - - Lucrezia threw the dagger - - - -

Alexander: Lucrezia - - - - ?

Cesare: It was a frightful blunder, which, praise God, had a merciful ending. Lucrezia wanted to choose her husband with the dagger - - and struck you - - - -

Lucrezia: Will Your Holiness forgive me - - - ?

Alexander: I bless thee, my child, with the Papal blessing.

Lucrezia (kisses the hand which gives the benediction).

Alexander: And whom shall we grant the child as her husband? For she must have a husband as soon as possible - - at whom in the future she can throw the

dagger - - if the desire to do so comes upon her - - - -

Cesare: Yes - - - - should Lucrezia not be consulted as to her possible wishes - - - - ?

Lucrezia: Here is a drop of blood spattered upon the list - - upon the name of Gasparro Proscida. Him will I marry. For we have become blood relations - - - -

Alexander: Is he married - - - - ?

Cesare: He is a bachelor, twenty-five years old - - - - rich in influence and worldly goods, beautiful in countenance, noble in figure - - Lucrezia, you could not have chosen better - - - -

Alexander: A secret messenger shall be sent to him at once from the office of the Vatican with our stern command that he shall present himself here and request the hand of our beloved, our only, daughter Lucrezia. (To Lucrezia) Are you satisfied with that, Child?

Lucrezia: I am. (To the courier, who appears) His Holiness has just been saved through the inscrutable will of God from a serious danger to his life. Let all the bells of the Holy City peal a Te Deum in gratitude!

Alexander: Amen!

(Bells begin to ring.)

[XXI]

LUCREZIA and her presumptive bridegroom meet for the first time.

He seizes her small, slender hand.

May I keep this lovely hand forever?

Forever is a large word—

For life long—

What life long? There are lives which last a very short time. Will you not be seated, Prince?

Thank you, Princess. Will you permit me to remain standing?

You will grow weary.

Not so easily. Principessa, I heard a half hour ago of your wish to marry me.

Will it be difficult for you to fulfill this desire?

It will be difficult for me to speak the truth.

Why?

We have accustomed ourselves in these days to lies.

Who?

We all—

You mean, no one any longer speaks the truth?

No one—

Not even I?

I do not presume to hold to beauty the mirror of truth.

My name is neither Bella nor Vera, but Lucrezia.

And you speak the truth?

Alas, no.

Why not?

Because one may not speak the truth—

And who forbids you to speak the truth?

Reason.

Do you worship the goddess of reason?

I do not worship idols. But suppose I lead the way by setting you a good example?

Lead the way—where?

The way of truth—would you follow?

If it contains no snares—no pitfalls—perhaps—

Perhaps?

Lucrezia looks long at him.

He retracts:

No; surely. I would certainly follow you if I—dared trust you—

Well, you may—

You wanted to lead the way—

Yes. Then please listen.

Lucrezia's eyes begin to gleam. I have chosen you for my husband not because I love you. I do not know you at all. And love you as little as any other person. I do not even love myself. But I wanted to make an end of this life here in the Vatican. I wanted to get away from this atmosphere of the Borgias. It is not for weak natures. And I am weak. An opportunity arises. I snatch at it—and hold you— She holds his hands, which he withdraws from her.

She is urgent:

Now it is your turn.

He begins falteringly:

Well, then— So I will tell you the truth—when your father's message came—I was frightened—my name and my possessions have long stood upon the proscription list—my death would be only a convenience to him—to him and his son. I thought, the end has

come. I took leave of my people at home as if going to my death. I come here and learn to my astonishment that the summons is no trap, that no daggers or canterellas are lying in wait for me—that I am actually to marry you. What an honor! But I do not know the reason why I am deemed worthy of it, for I do not believe you. You are a Borgia. The people fear the Borgias. The people hate the Borgias—

Do you belong to the people?

And I, I despise the Borgias. Yes, I despise them—

He drew a deep breath and looked straight in her eyes, which filled with tears.

You are right in despising us. We are indeed like—like scourges brandished over mankind. But they force us. You are right—I am not worthy of bearing your name—

You humble yourself before me—but I cannot trust your abasement. If the Borgias humble themselves, there is perfidy hidden behind it. Have you indeed the perfidy—to speak the truth?

Lucrezia:

No—I lied before—now I will speak the truth: I love you. I love you! Because I loved you—have

loved you for a long time—I chose you for my husband—I have played this unworthy comedy—

The prince was dumfounded:

But you did not know me at all?

Lucrezia stammered:

Oh—but—I watched you from my window when you rode by each morning.

I have *never* ridden by your window—

Then take me anyway in your arms! Why do you not kiss me?

You are lying now—as you lied before. I am bidden to marry you. Good. To love you, to that no power on earth can compel me.

Then you hate me?

I pity you. I have compassion for you.—

Compassion? I am not so weak as that. Yet it is true. I have been lying. I have lied the whole time. And now I will speak plainly. I have permitted myself a jest. Such sport as we Borgias allow ourselves. I wanted to put you to the test. You conspire against us. You are in league with the Orsini and the Colonna. You are a rebel.

I am not afraid of death.

Have no fear. We Borgias do not revenge ourselves so simply. You shall remain alive.

Lucrezia clapped her hands. The fat old nurse, Julia, appeared. Julia—may I present to you your betrothed, Signore Gasparro Proscida? He has asked me for your hand in marriage. He is madly in love with you. He cannot wait for the wedding night. I myself will prepare your bridal bed, and His Holiness, the Pope in His Own Most High Person, will bless you with the Apostolic blessing.

Julia blushed deeply and cast her eyes in confusion to the floor.

The prince was white:

If the Devil wanted to take the trouble, Donna Lucrezia, to enter you—he would not find a corner in which to creep. You are full of every kind of deviltry.—

The marriage contract between Lucrezia and Don Gasparro already drawn up was on the tenth of June declared null and void.

On the twentieth of June a marriage contract was concluded between Lucrezia and Prince Alfonso of Aragon.

[XXII]

Dschem, a very young Turkish prince, a brother of the Sultan, fell into the hands of the Pope, who at once seized and held him.

One never knew to what use one might sometime put him.

To exact a ransom,

to use him as hostage.

Chi sa.

In order to provide a spectacle for the Roman people, he had the Turk led into Rome in festal array.

The prince rode upon a noble, costly camel and bowed ceremoniously on all sides, where stood the rabble and flung at him jests and laughter.

Following the prince and led by Turkish guards, came giraffes, lions, and leopards.

A small cheetah ran out of line and played with a dirty white spitz dog.

The prince was received with ceremony at the Vatican.

The statute had been composed by Johannes Burcardus, for there was no precedent for the event.

The prince went up to Lucrezia, made obeisance, and spoke: Selam—y aleiküm!—Güselszin!

Lucrezia smiled helplessly:

I do not understand you.

Dschem inquired:

Naszyl?

And, pointing to Cesare:

Bu adam kim dir?

Cesare did not move, and Dschem muttered something between his teeth like Aerbijeszis. Then cried:

Asikar düsman gisli düsman—dan ejidiri.

The Pope, who saw the prince turning in confusion first to Cesare then to Lucrezia, said:

The Turkish language, I have been informed, knows no grammatical distinction of genders. On this account, Dschem probably cannot distinguish between man and woman. No doubt he will soon be taught to understand this here in Rome. He is still young enough.

[XXIII]

Fra Girolamo, having returned to Florence, began to denounce the great harlot Rome, the slough of all evil. We must, he proclaimed, begin with ourselves. We cannot expect the world to grow better, if we do not amend ourselves. If we wish to reform the Church in its Head and members—then we should start with a reformation in ourselves, in the Order of the Dominicans. And so great was his spiritual power that the cloister of San Marco and all the Dominican cloisters of Tuscany of their own free will set about purifying their morals and customs.

Fra Girolamo preached first in a narrow street, then in a public square. After this in the Church of San Marco, and when this became too small for the multitude of his hearers, in the Cathedral of Florence.

One of his most eager listeners was the young Michelangelo Buonarotti, a sculptor by occupation and pupil in the art school established by Lorenzo di Medici.

The apocalyptic preaching of the Frate suited his melancholic nature. He liked best to draw the Last Judgment.

Lorenzo di Medici, il magnifico himself, came one day to hear Fra Girolamo, screwed up his short-sighted eyes, and listened. A few weeks later he lay in Careggi at the point of death.

He had Fra Girolamo summoned.

I know no other sincere monk beside you. Grant me absolution!

Fra Girolamo spoke: Three things are necessary—first, the true and living faith; secondly, the idea of eternal peace; and, thirdly, an uncompromising willingness to bring about actual freedom.

Lorenzo the tyrant stared at him and turned his face to the wall.

Fra Girolamo returned to Florence without having received his confession or granted him absolution.

[XXIV]

The vain and sickly Piero di Medici succeeds Lorenzo as the ruler of Florence.

His chief amusement consists in playing ball in the public streets with his cavaliers and courtesans.

One day a ball thrown by Piero di Medici falls through a window of the church, Santa Maria del Fiore, where Fra Girolamo is just then preaching.

The Frate seizes the ball and tramples it under foot upon the stone floor of the church. Thus will God crush Florence, if you do not gird up your strength, people of Florence! How long will you allow yourselves to be made sport of!—

Piero cannot hold the reins of government.

They drag after him upon the ground.

The banking house of the Medicis falls into difficulties.

Piero calls in many credits granted by his father to prominent men in Florence.

There are hard times in trade.

Many respected merchants go bankrupt.

The poor and the needy begin to go hungry.

The harvest failed. Peasants came in droves into the city to seek work, which they did not find.

The price of grain rose from day to day.

The stajo climbed from thirty-four to sixty soldi.

Disaffection toward Piero increases.

As the famine did not end, Fra Girolamo preached and commanded that a "day of alms" should be kept: in Santa Maria del Fiore, in Santa Maria Novella, and in Santo Spirito.

A special altar was erected in all the churches, the "altar of poverty." And there came well-to-do citizens, men and women, their consciences roused by the Frate, and made offerings at the altar of poverty: pearls, brilliants, chains and rings of gold, basins of silver, silken garments, velvet and woolen stuffs. But Piero di Medici was not among those who gave alms.

Then the people went before his palace and cried:

Hand over, hand over—

Hand over your weapons—

Hand over your crown—

Hand over your regency—

The apocalyptic preaching and the gloomy prophecies of Fra Girolamo powerfully affected the Florentine people.

The maidens and the women laid aside their bright garments and instead of red, green, violet, yellow, one saw only gray and black upon the piazza.

Many men went in brown linen cassocks, many with a rope about the neck to show that in the depths of their soul they were humble suppliants and deserved naught in the sight of God but to be hanged.

When Fra Girolamo preached in Santa Maria del Fiore he directed the men and women to different places. They might not mingle together.

Many men also hastened in distress to the surgeons, begging to be cured. They had castrated themselves with crude instruments, kitchen knives and sharp stones of the field, and inflicted upon themselves wounds difficult to heal.

[XXV]

THE POPE, who had heard through his police agents of the "prophecies of calamity" uttered by Fra Girolamo and his vigorous sermons "against the Antichrist" (by whom he meant Alexander Borgia), and who had learned how the Frate was stirring the hearts of the faithful, drummed nervously with his knuckles on the window of his study in the Vatican.

This Savonarola! An impostor!

Have I done nothing for the Church? Have I not personally given an organ and an altar to Santa Maria del Popolo and had the cracked ceiling in Santa Maria Maggiore restored? And have I not secured the power of the Church, inasmuch as I have provided the Castle of Sant' Angelo with fortifications, moats, embrasures, large and small towers?

The Castle of Sant' Angelo, the center of the Vatican, is impregnable!

The rock of St. Peter upon which it is erected stands immovable.

Yet I could make hell hot for certain rich bankers and merchants here in Rome who come from Florence, by threatening them with confiscation of their property in case they did not exert all their influence with their fellow citizens of Florence to bring down this mad Dominican Pater and render him harmless.—

There occurred to him, however, a far livelier thought, a wilier one, how he might combat the Pater, and he had to laugh until he fell back into his chair.

The people love gruesome prophecies, whether they come to pass or not. They like to shudder. We will send some one to Florence who shall predict much more horrible calamities than this worthy hound of God.

And he sent a well-meaning, stout, somewhat asthmatic Franciscan Pater, Domenico da Ponzo, to Florence and obtained for him permission to preach from the cathedral pulpit.

If now Fra Girolamo prophesied in the church a local flood, Fra Domenico, breathing heavily, at once predicted in the cathedral an impending universal del-

uge. When Fra Girolamo foretold the downfall of Italy and the entry of a foreign king upon Italian soil, a second Cyrus, Fra Domenico stopped at nothing less than the overthrow of the world. The Franciscan had one thing more through which he could disabuse the Florentines as to Fra Girolamo. I will tell you from what source Fra Girolamo obtains his prophecies and knowledge: simply through breach of faith in regard to the secrets of the confessional. The brethren of his Order relate to him the confessions of their penitents and it is easy for him then to tell these credulous sheep what, miraculously, he knows of them. And so he gets the reputation of knowing everything. E vero—? The people ran from Fra Girolamo to Fra Domenico and from Fra Domenico to Fra Girolamo and out of sheer distress did not know which way to turn, until Piero di Medici forbade either preacher to appear for some time.

The Florentines expelled Piero di Medici, who had been their ruler since Lorenzo. Fra Girolamo had denounced his reign as diabolical and tyrannical and preached that Florence should be a free republic in

which the people should command and obey themselves. He himself drew up a constitution and laid it before the Signoria, which accepted it.

The motto was:

Popolo e libertà!

And soon echo answered in all the streets and lanes of Florence,

Popolo e libertà!—

[XXVI]

Fra Girolamo was preaching:

Faith is the only thing that matters, my brethren, the faith which removes mountains—and gold and precious stones, that for these you may have a share in the heavenly gold. Knowledge is a thing of the day and the hour. What I know to-day, I will know no more to-morrow; learning discovers laws to-day, which appear to be eternally valid—and to-morrow it finds other laws which are diametrically opposed to the first. Which law is valid now? That of yesterday or to-day? There is one law that remains, my brethren, that which was before yesterday and which will last beyond to-morrow! The law of God: the Christian faith. An old woman who perseveres in her faith in Christ knows more of the world than Plato and Aristotle taken together. A little, ignorant child knows more than all the wisdom of the philosophers. Why is this? Because he is pure. For purity is the true

standard for the earth. When children have assumed the rulership of the world, Christ will return. He will return to you in triumph, led on His way by the children, guided by the three Christian, and the four cardinal, virtues.

He will come hither in a triumphal car, drawn by the four mystic beasts. Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles will accompany it on either side. Martyrs and saints will follow the car, then the priests, and after them the innumerable hosts of Christians.

Last in the train, however, will come a black horse, caparisoned in black. It will drag with it the lifeless, soulless corpse of the Antichrist: the dead body of Alexander Borgia, whose soul the Devil will have taken.

We must erect a funeral pile upon the Place of the Signori and burn all symbols of an era of decay and ruin.

But only pure and undefiled hands may receive and consign to the purging fire the immoral and obscene things:

These will be the hands of the children!

As a result of Fra Girolamo's sermon hundreds of

children went from house to house and demanded "all the vain baubles of this world below" for the pyre.

They brought to the Place of the Signori in their little hand carts: carnival masks and carnival costumes, mirrors, harps, chessboards, playing cards, pictures of nude and seminude women, among them one also of Lucrezia Borgia. Then books of poets to be condemned: Boccaccio's *Decameron,* Petrarch's *Sonnets,* Ovid's *Ars amandi,* the *Elegies* of Tibullus, the *Love Songs* of Catullus—

The children sang as they threw them all into the flaming fire and danced in a circle about it.

Fra Girolamo himself, when the burning pile was about half consumed, threw one thing more, a portrait of Pope Alexander, into the glowing ashes.

On to hell, Satan!

The picture burst into flames.

[XXVII]

A YOUNG Roman was announced anonymously to Fra Girolamo, who knelt absorbed in prayer at his stool in a poor cell; the young man wished urgently to speak with him alone.

Fra Girolamo opened the door of his cell and bade the young man enter.

The young man waited politely until the Frater invited him to be seated.

There was nothing but a stool in the cell. Girolamo seated himself upon the edge of the bed.

The young man, whose gaze was frank and open, his forehead high, his manner refined and reserved, began the conversation:

I must first tell you my name. For I know you—but you do not know me: My name is Cesare Borgia.

Fra Girolamo started up from the bed. Cesare raised his fine, slender hand: Do not be frightened. I am incognito in Florence. For your sake. I will not

devour you. Besides, I have no weapons upon me.

The Frater made a movement of denial:

I do not fear you.

Cesare inclined himself courteously.

So much the worse for you. I do not underestimate you.

Fra Girolamo walked twice the length of his cell and stopped before the crucifix and the sanctuary lamp.

The light of the sacred lamp flickered uncertainly.

He turned suddenly toward Cesare: What do you want of me?

Cesare:

Peace. Peace between you and the Borgias.

Girolamo broke forth violently:

Who has broken the peace? Who has brought disorder upon Italy, the world? Who has set at naught the eternal laws of morality? Who rules by means of war and the horrors of war? Who inflames all mankind against one another—to reap advantage from its discord?

Cesare remained very calm:

You are a dreamer, Frater. We Borgias are realists. Morality is a very pretty leading string for the weak,

who need it. But it is a matter of the times like fashions. No world philosophy can be built upon it. You yourself, Frater, are as much outside the present —fashion as the Borgias.

Girolamo insisted:

What is the purpose of your visit?

Cesare struck his glove across his knee:

My father sent me. You have greatly hurt and offended His Holiness. Were His Holiness not so magnanimous—his voice hardened—he would propose the gallows for you. Instead, he offers you—

Fra Girolamo gazed expectantly at the lips of the Borgia. The latter concluded:

the cardinal's hat.

Fra Girolamo burst into laughter:

The cardinal's hat usually costs with His Holiness from ten to twenty thousand ducats. I regret—

Cesare interrupted him:

You have taken the vow of poverty.

You will receive the purple under one condition—

Which would be?

You will immediately cease from the warfare against His Holiness.

The monk thundered:

Never! Never! Never! The conscience of humanity and my own conscience demand this warfare of me. There is but one possibility of understanding and peace between the Pope and me: the Pope shall promise repentance, atonement, amendment, and enter upon an immediate reformation of the Church.

Cesare Borgia arose:

He spoke softly:

Never. Never. Never. You have a hard head and a stiff back. Nevertheless, think upon this: The head of His Holiness is not only hard, but likewise shrewd. And his backbone is the Church, while you can lean merely on the crumbling walls of a Florentine cloister. But, as you will.—

The Borgia stood up, drew on his gloves, bowed, and was gone.

[XXVIII]

Charles VIII., king of France, set out for Italy with a well-armed, well-disciplined army that he might establish his claim to the throne of Naples. The Pope issued a circular letter against him.

The forces of the Italian cities and princes, medley companies of hirelings and adventurers, vanished before him like chaff.

Charles VIII. marched into Florence. And the people remembered that Fra Girolamo had prophesied the advent of a new Cyrus. Small, insignificant, with red hair, a crooked nose, a humped back, with blear eyes and a receding forehead, a giant head upon a tiny body, the king sat huddled upon a dapple-gray horse like a monkey at a fair.

His short, fat legs, without spurs, hung below, swinging to right and left like the pendulum of a clock. He rode, his lance at his hip, through a lane of astonished Florentine men, women, and children.

A child who was lifted high by his father that he might see better shrieked into the deathlike stillness: Is that a king?

Laughter rattled against the marching French army. But the Italians were soon to remark that this monster was in very fact a king.—

The Pope had declared himself against him. This piqued him.

He had a report made to him of the internal conditions of Florence, had white bread distributed to the people, and summoned Savonarola to himself.

Savonarola appeared.

The king, accustomed to move about while he talked, described circles and spirals about him.

It looked as if the little man in his gay doublet were performing a modish dance about the tall dark man. Ah—so, well—yes—ch—t—he had a way of larding his speech with meaningless consonants—you are—Fra Girolamo—uncrowned king—ch—t—of this—of this republic—or so—

Savonarola, with a deprecatory gesture, was about to make a reply, but the king trod—inadvertently—upon his foot:

Yes—ch—t—what shall we do then—His Holiness—soi-disant—yes—in Rome—ch—t—is putting difficulties in my way to Naples—he threatens me—in fact—ch—t—eventually—with excommunication—I wanted—yes—soi-disant—your opinion upon the case—ch—t—

He was standing still before Fra Girolamo and looking up fixedly at him.

Savonarola's brow had darkened:

Is Your Majesty informed of the character and enormity of this—this Devil, who has usurped the Papal See through simony?

The king balanced himself upon one foot and then the other:

I am—I am—

Well then—Fra Girolamo breathed deeply:

You have it in your power to do the greatest service to Christendom (and yourself at the same time)—the greatest service that has ever yet been rendered it—

The king fidgeted about:

And—and?

Fra Girolamo spoke vehemently:

Depose the Pope, Majesty, when you enter Rome, summon a general council that shall pronounce his pontificate, which he has usurped and obtained through simony, invalid, and Italy, Europe, the world will acclaim you as their deliverer!

The king resumed his restless wandering.

Yes—so—soi-disant—I thank you—I will consider it all—will act after consideration—ch—t—You may go—

Fra Girolamo went.

When he was without, the king sprang like a child upon the window seat and saw below the dark monk crossing the square in the dazzling sun.

He clapped his hands several times in amusement, and it was not certain whether he was applauding the monk or himself.

Ah—ch—t—thought he, I have also received letters from several Roman cardinals, particularly from a certain—ch—t—Giovanni Battisti Orsini—which tend—ch—t—in the same direction as this—this monk—yes—one must consider everything—and—then do what is best—ch—t—

Fra Girolamo knelt in his cell before the crucifix.

Lord, Lord—I thank Thee for Thy grace and Thy glorious aid! Enlighten Thou the mind of the king of France with the lamp of Thine eternal wisdom! The temple of Antichrist in Rome totters—it will fall —I perceive it, know it from Thy divine tokens! Oh grant that I may be Samson, who pulls down the pillars of the temple!

His countenance became transfigured:

I feel a great trembling of the earth—the red Devil upon the throne of St. Peter grows white as chalk —he falls—he is crushed—I set my foot upon his neck—

[XXIX]

Charles VIII. marched in triumph through Italy. He arrived at the gates of Rome. Alexander in all haste entrenched himself in the Castle of Sant' Angelo. It is a good thing now that he has spent thousands upon thousands of ducats and indulgence money in its fortification.

Charles VIII. surrounds the Castle of Sant' Angelo and plans an assault.

He has to admit that he has not much chance with the strength of the bastions. Furthermore, he has underestimated the power of the Papal symbol. His soldiers murmur.

They will not fight against "Christ's Regent."

There is nothing for the two parties to do but to conclude a treaty.

Johannes Burcardus, the master of Papal ceremonies, rode out to the king of France in order to make the formal arrangements for his reception.

The king shook his head:

Let us leave out—ch—t—the pomp. I will come just as I come.

Johannes Burcardus looked at his well-kept finger nails, the only thing that he did keep well, for he considered washing unhealthy and performed his ablutions merely with salves and powders:

His Holiness begs Your Majesty to restore to him a person who is dear to the heart of His Holiness and who through an unfortunate accident fell into the hands of Your Majesty while riding out for pleasure—

The king chuckled:

Through a—ch—t—fortunate accident. I request a three thousand ducats in cash and you may—soi-disant—take the person back with you at once.

Johannes Burcardus drew a purse of money which the Pope had given him to take along and began to count out the ducats.

The king counted eagerly at the same time.

It was correct.—He rubbed his gnarly hands. You may take Madonna Julia Farnese with you immediately with my compliments to His Holiness. She has already cried her eyes out. Those beautiful eyes!

Charles VIII. demands of the Pope as hostage for the exact fulfillment of the treaty his son Cesare and the Turkish prince Dschem for six months.

At first Alexander is indignant.

After talking with Cesare in private, he smilingly gives his consent.

Pope and king confront each other in the Vatican garden, both bareheaded, and measure each other.

The king bows the knee three times and throws his pumpkin head back in his neck so that he can look up at the Pope, who kisses his own hand instead of that of the king.

This smiling, thinks Charles, does not please me.

I must be on my guard.

And Pope Alexander observes the king's ugly grinning.

And thinks the same thing.

Your Majesty, says the Pope slowly, carefully choosing every word, shall to-morrow in a public consistory, in the presence of the cardinals, acknowledge me as true Pope and lawful representative and successor of Peter and swear allegiance to me.

The king hesitated for a moment.

In the name of the three devils, he snorted.

Cesare Borgia, the beautiful, rode in his cardinal's purple upon a mule by the side of Charles VIII., the ugly one, on the road to Naples. When they had gone but a few miles, however, he permitted the king, apparently in devotion to him, to ride in advance. He was feeling slightly ill, for Charles VIII. had a bad breath.

Thirty hinnies laden with baggage followed the Borgia cardinal, and nineteen wagons with full chests and coffers.

The first stop for the night was made at Marino.

Cesare Borgia wished the king the blessing of a good night and courteously declined the pleasure of a game of cards, which the king offered him.

The next morning when an adjutant of the king went to waken the cardinal in his tent, the latter was nowhere to be found.

He had escaped even before midnight disguised as a groom and had galloped back to Rome.

Charles VIII. in a rage struck the officer who brought him the news in the face with his riding whip.

And the many coffers and chests, all that costly baggage, he has coolly left behind?

He ordered the coffers and chests to be broken open. They contained nothing but straw and field stones.

[XXX]

Charles VIII. marched into Naples without encountering any resistance.

King Alfonso II. of Naples had made off.

The French king was in triumph.

He stood upon Posilipo, beheld the city of Naples at his feet, in the west the blue sea with its islands Capri and Ischia, in the south Vesuvius, about whose head lay a cloud of smoke.

He swept the landscape with his small, plump hand, covered over with warts.

I have reached the summit of my power.

All this—is mine.

I, the ugly one, have all this beautiful land subject to me.

And he, the unloved, unlovely, felt himself strangely moved to love.

He had some fisher maidens from Santa Lucia come to him and gratified himself until early morning with

Laura, the fairest of them, a young sixteen-year-old girl of Capri. Half faint with loathing, she staggered back to Santa Lucia, crossed in a tiny boat to Capri, and plunged from her beloved native earth by Faraglioni into the longed-for homelike sea.

Dolphins played about her sinking corpse, flashing phosphorescent in the green water.

A sawfish pityingly cut through her breast, and a young shark tenderly devoured her right arm.

Then the quiet deeps received her. Sea spiders trod lightly and yet ponderously over her. Crawfish made themselves at home in her eye sockets. A squid rested by her after a drawn battle with a lobster.

Cesare Borgia dashed into his father's arms:

Saved!

The Pope gently stroked his head:

I have not been idle. We will bring together a "Holy League for Maintaining the Dignity of the Papal See." Wait six months: the emperor in Germany, the king of Spain, and the greater number of the Italian princes and cities will enter into alliance with us for the

granting of special indulgences, the relinquishment of revenues, granting of subsidies. Trionfo Borgia! Trionfo Borgia! echoed Cesare and laid hold of the dagger in his belt.

Charles VIII. was not happy in his occupancy of Naples.

His luck had deserted him with the escape of the Borgia.

Prince Dschem, the Turkish hostage, died a few days later, as officially reported, from spoiled tunny fish. There were not a few who gave voice to the suspicion that the Borgia before his hasty departure had shaken a white powder into his evening potion.

Doctor and servant stood perplexed and helpless about his deathbed.

No one understood Turkish.

The king screamed at him with excited gesticulations.

Helpless as a dying animal, the Turk opened wide his inflamed eyes.

His last words were:

Haiwan ölür Szemeri Kalyr, inszamölür ady Valyr—

Discipline relaxed considerably by degrees in Charles's army under the influence of the warm Neapolitan climate.

The French soldiery fell into a debauch of harlotry. One stumbled in the broad light of day upon couples in convulsive embrace in dark lanes and upon stairways.

An epidemic broke out in the French army, which was called the French disease and which carried away thousands of soldiers.

Charles was in despair.

He received news through mounted couriers of the formation of the "Holy League for Maintaining the Dignity of the Papal See" and of the refusal of the Pope, despite the agreement, to concede Naples to him.

They want to maintain the dignity of this Papal See! Ch—t—! The violation of his word and of the treaty means nothing any more to this . . . he found no scornful epithet base enough.

Charles began the withdrawal from Naples: with a decimated, dejected soldiery. The Pope had prudently left Rome and remained hidden in Orvieto.

Charles did not find him.

The League's army stood ready at Fortenuovo totally to annihilate Charles.

He succeeded by feigning another march in avoiding battle and in passing over the French border.

He collapsed when he reached Paris.

He would see no one.

A raven, a monkey, and a black dog were his companions at his death.

Louis XII. ascended the throne of France.

[XXXI]

The Pope expressed his opinion.

The Florentines are constitution-mad. They give themselves a new constitution every minute and yet they are always in a worse situation. They do not start with life itself, with mankind, but with a fiction, "politics," and construct purely mathematical parliaments, and councils, and franchises, and who knows what. This Fra Girolamo is in fact nothing but a constructor. He wants a rule of "the best." Each one of the sixteen districts of the city of Florence was to choose its "best"; these sixteen best men, in turn, the best among them. Who do you suppose, Cesare, will finally have authority?

Cesare smiled his gracious smile:

The very best of all, who will have the other fifteen hanged.

His Holiness, Pope Alexander VI., to the Prior and

the Brethren of the Cloister San Marco of the preaching Order of the Dominicans at Florence.

My beloved Sons! Greeting and the Apostolic benediction!

We have learned to our dismay and our profound sorrow that a certain Fra Girolamo Savonarola of Ferrara, who belongs among your number, has taken upon himself to spread abroad false doctrines of the Devil, heresies, and is endeavoring to stir up sedition. He blasphemously affirms that he has been enlightened by God Himself. But it is the torch of Satan that burns over him, and which Satan himself will be the first to cast into the pyre which a righteous tribunal will erect for him. For the Devil knows no gratitude and in derision forsakes the souls that he has led astray.

I have waited, delayed with Apostolic patience until he should himself become aware of the presumptuous nature of his prophecy and creep in repentance of heart to the Cross of Christ, which we have with longing held out to him. In vain! I have deceived myself. Appointed by God the Lord to preserve the edifice of Christ from all that can shake its foundations, I find

myself with bleeding heart compelled, in order that the Church may again be given desired peace and concord, to intrust the settlement of the unhappy affair to the Vicar-general, Brother Sebastian of Brescia, to whom, on pain of immediate excommunication in case of insubordination, unqualified and unconditional obedience must be rendered.

Given and sealed Rome . . . etc.

The Pope received several letters from Fra Girolamo.

He left them unopened and unread.

He rolled paper balls with them and shot at sparrows with a pea shooter from one of the Vatican windows.

[XXXII]

The Pope's letter produced its effect.

The report soon spread through the streets of Florence that the Pope had decreed the excommunication of Fra Girolamo.

News came also that the Pope had come off victor in the conflict with Charles VIII., who had come to remove him from his high office.

And doubt and faintness of heart began to take possession of the citizens of Florence.

The Pope, let him be as and what he will—he is still the Pope. He has his authority from God the Lord. And all priests have it again solely from him, the Pope.

He may be a great sinner—but are we not all sinners as Fra Girolamo himself preaches? And if he errs as a man, does this necessarily mean that he is in error as Pope? Is he not as Pope the vessel of God —who pours therein His wisdom and knowledge?

May a priest rebel against the Papal priesthood? Was not perhaps the sudden outbreak of the plague in Florence God's punishment for the blasphemy and heresy of Fra Girolamo?

Scarcely had the Pope hurled upon him the ban of excommunication, publicly proclaimed from the pulpits of Santo Spirito and Santa Maria Novella, when a few days later, first in Borgo di Ricoboli, the pestilence burst forth. Sixty persons died the first day, eighty the second, as many as two hundred the third. Many rich people fled.

Fra Girolamo remained, visited the sick, and preached, paying no attention to the excommunication:

Those who are grown, who have had their part in the sins of this world, are the ones, through God's counsel, who die.

But God allows the children to live that a new generation may arise who shall not bear the guilt of their fathers.—

And as a fact not a child or a young person under twenty years perished of the sickness.

Yet the Florentines no longer believed his prophecies.

The spell of the Pope was greater than the spell of Fra Girolamo's personality.

People fell dead walking upon the street, and the bearers came with their biers and carried them away in silence.

In July the sun was suddenly eclipsed and it became dark night in the bright day. And when it grew light again the streets were strewn with corpses. Some stood at the gates of the houses who had died standing. An old Jewish money changer sat upon the Mercato Nuovo by a bank, his head supported in his hand, bent over a roll of ducats.

He seemed to be asleep.

It was said that the Devil was about his tricks by night in the streets of Florence. Every day there would be some one who had seen him: with glowing red eyes, in the form of a fox walking upright, his long bushy tail elegantly folded like a train over his right fore-paw.

Even the young, so dearly loved and highly extolled by Fra Girolamo, began to give way to error and disobedience.

One afternoon a crowd of children from ten to twelve

years old paraded up to the Piazza della Signoria. They dragged with them a cross, carried hammer and nails, and would have actually crucified one of their number, a small idiot of seven years, if two of the city police had not come that way and prevented them.

It went hard enough with these two officials, two young men of Tuscan origin, for the idiot bit them in the hands and the children thrust at them wildly with the cross. Only with great difficulty could the children be subdued.

Fra Girolamo was shaken.

He drew up his theses once more and fastened them upon the door of the cathedral:

"God's one and only Church is in need of complete inner and profound regeneration.

"God will chastise her.

"God will restore her.

"Florence will be chastened.

"Florence will be renewed.

"The heathen, Turks, unbelievers will be converted to Christ.

"All this will come to pass in our time.

"The excommunication pronounced by His Unholi-

ness, the Lord Antipope, against the brother Fra Girolamo is null and void.

"He who disregards it, does no sin.—

"Written and subscribed by my own hand

"Florence, Cloister of San Marco

Fra Girolamo."

He wrote letters in his despair to the Emperor Maximilian, to the kings of Spain, France, England, Hungary, and implored them to take action against the Antichrist and summon a council. He would speak before the council, bringing well-founded charges against the false Pope. The Pope should then respond and defend himself before him and the council.

Fra Girolamo presumed once more in defiance of the express command of the Signoria to ascend the pulpit of San Marco.

Hardly had he opened his mouth when a deafening clamor was raised against him.

He could not utter a word.

His friends no longer dared to take his part, and one after another they stole in shame from the church.

The children upon the street shrank from him when

he tried to stroke their foreheads or caress them. The small idiot who had been willing to let them crucify him spit upon him. And certain others threw horse dung at him, which stuck to his cowl.

[XXXIII]

THE MANDATORS of the Pope were the Venetian, Giocchino Turriano, general of the Dominican Order, and the Spaniard, Francesco Remolino.

Hear me, my son, thus the Pope drew to one side, as he was leaving, the small, malevolently amiable Francesco Remolino, Cesare's former tutor—I speak to you as Spaniard. From Spaniard to Spaniard. You, like me, are a lover of the corrida, the bullfight. There are small spears with barbed hooks, which are thrust into the animal's body to rouse him to fury. Stab such an instrument into Frater Girolamo's belly. Play the picador. Put him to the torture until he admits whatever you wish. He must die an were he John the Baptist redivivus.

If there is no other way, you will have to inveigle and entice a confession from him. Promise him if he confesses he shall remain but a week in confinement. Do you strictly keep your word—let him out of prison

after one week—but only to hang him. You may be at rest in promising him his life—some one else will pronounce the sentence of death. One should always keep to the truth. A naïve person will call such methods designing and underhanded. But what else does the Apostle Paul mean when he says: "Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile." We must be cunning, Francesco Remolino.

The Spaniard bowed with an unctuous smile: Your Holiness will be satisfied with me.

The Spaniard, as soon as he arrived in Florence, had set up for him by the armor-maker's guild a thick rope with block and pulley. He arranged the instruments of torture and proceeded to torture the monk in the correct order. He first put on the thumbscrew, then the hand screw, afterward the Spanish heel, next the Spanish boot. Then followed the knuckle torture, rod torture, the toe torture, strapping, torture by rope. The Spaniard himself bound Fra Girolamo to the rope and pulled him up and down by the arms fourteen times. The feet were weighted with stones.

Confess, mocked the Spaniard, confess!

Muscles and tendons grated and tore. At the thirteenth time blood gushed from his mouth, nose, and ears; he confessed all that his tormentors asked of him. The spiked hare and the pronged cradle did not even have to function. It was moreover not necessary in order to obtain the truth to bring in the goats appointed by law to lick the soles of the feet of the delinquent, after these had been artificially wounded and strewn with salt.

Turriano himself protocoled the Frater's statements, in which he "of his own free will" accused himself of every sort of heresy and diabolic fraud:

As God is my Judge!

He had served only the Devil and all his prophecies had been the promptings of the Devil, who also had driven him to rebellion against the Holy See with a scourge of flaming fire.

The people of Florence, learning that Fra Girolamo had under torture acknowledged his seven deadly sins, turned in scorn completely from him.—

Had he been a true prophet, he would not have recanted his teachings. Not even upon the rack!

And one after another of his friends fell away.

Those who had been closest to him, held most aloof.

If they were asked:

You were acquainted quite intimately with this Fra Girolamo?—

their eyes would open wide and they would say:

What? That heretic Girolamo? That must be a mistake. I knew him only very slightly and at a distance —from his cursed, heretical preaching.

The stake was erected upon the Piazza della Signoria together with comfortable seats for the spectators' gallery. The first place cost one lira, the second place two quattrini, the third five denari. The executioner's assistants went through the standing room with collection plates.

The people of Florence and the region round had gathered together in great numbers, among them many men, women, and children who had loved him, but who had been faithless to their affection in the time of trial.

Yet no one lifted a hand for him. Only some women sobbed, and one small boy of eleven years threw stones at the executioner.

Fra Girolamo, clothed in all the insignia of his Order, was led out to the place of tribunal.

Canons, priests, councilors, officials, leaders of the people, awaited him.

The general of the Dominicans stepped up to him and tore from him one insignium after the other with the words:

Separo te ab ecclesia militante, non triumphante!

Fra Girolamo answered him quietly:

Militante, non triumphante: hoc enim tuum non est!

The executioner bound his hands together upon his back and led him to the stake, where he was fastened to a thick post in the center.

Near the end of the way a hunchback, an officious member of the Compagnia di Santa Maria del Tempio, forced himself upon him, his office, besides, being that of consoling the person condemned to death and burying him:

Do you want consolation, Frater? Costs one lira.—

A small consolation? Costs only a couple of soldi.—

They lighted the heap of fagots. A storm had gathered in the heavens. It began to fall in drops, to thunder and lighten.

Fra Girolamo burned and in the flames became transported with rapture:

I behold an angel descending from heaven, whose raiment is a cloud and about whose brow a rainbow is entwined.

He bears in his right hand the fiery sword of God and will brandish it fearfully over mankind, and his voice is the thunder, which resounds mightily over the earth, and in his left hand he carries the cup of His wrath, to pour it out upon the earth.

Woe, woe to the great city of Babylon! The judgment has come speedily!

Gold, precious stones, silk, purple, ivory, marble, ebony,

wine, wheat, cattle, man, all will pass away within an hour.

O Angel of the Lord, deliver me from the destruction! Thrust thy glowing sword into my heart, which quivers for thee!

I burn! I am in flames! I blaze resplendent in the love of God!

O I, the torch of God! I shine over all seas and lands into the darkness of the earth!

And he began to sing:

Lasciatemi morire!

e che volete

che mi conforte

in cosi dura sorte

in cosi gran martire?

Lasciatemi morire!

For two hours the Frater burned.

His left arm fell from him first, then the right one.

When he was consumed, the executioners took the ashes, gathered them together, and scattered them in the Arno that not a particle of his dust should remain to serve posterity as a relic.

But the boy who had thrown stones at the executioners sprang into the river and swam toward a bit of charred substance, took it in his mouth as a dog fetches back a stick, and swam again to the shore, where he at once disappeared in the confusion of streets.

In the June following a strange sort of black caterpillar, never before seen there, made the meadows of Florence unsafe.

They had heads like a man's with faces that seemed to reveal the features of Pater Savonarola.

They fed only upon the most lowly and useless of weeds, a brier.

There was a remarkable grain harvest and the stajo fell to thirty soldi.

[XXXIV]

Son of mine, said Alexander, who had returned to Rome, to Cesare, we have time, now that we are rid of this Charles VIII. and this crazy Dominican, Fra Girolamo, to give a little attention to our internal foes, the Barons of Romagna, the Orsini and Colonna. Juan, the Duke of Gandia, my beloved son and Captain-general of the Papal State, will assume chief command against the rebellious knights. Grant him your blessing as brother and cardinal!

Cesare left the room without a word.

Juan took the field and suffered a lamentable defeat before the Orsini, who kept possession of all their fortresses.

Vannozza gave a small feast in her vineyard at Vincoli in San Pietro to celebrate the vintage and the investiture of the Duke of Gandia with the estates of Benevento and Terracina.

The Pope appeared; Lucrezia came, Juan, Sancia the

beautiful wife of Gioffredo, Cesare Borgia, and certain Roman nobles of the Borgias' circle of acquaintance.

Some monkeys, jesters, and professional gluttons were brought in for the enlivenment of the table. One of them began his meal with thirty hard-boiled eggs, followed immediately by an entire salame sausage, for which he had to scuffle with a monkey.

Arlotto, monk and fool, made obscene jokes. For example, he said that he, whose lasciviousness was well known, and the Pope understood how to conquer with the same means. The Pope, amused, inquired, With what? With the seal of the bull! But he was also a match for Demosthenes. How was that?—With the tongue. Juan fell over backward with laughter.

Lucrezia amused herself by pulling grapes from the vines and throwing the berries one by one into the guests' mouths.

The Pope laughed and coughed; he had choked on a grape.

Cesare bit his lips, together; the berries fell to the earth.

Sancia looked at him sideways.

Juan snapped them in most skillfully.

He succeeded in getting thirteen berries and was declared by Lucrezia the victor in the "berry throwing."

Later she sang Spanish songs and danced the tarantella.

The Pope followed affectionately each graceful movement.

They broke up at midnight.

The Pope and Lucrezia rode with torch riders and servants in one company.

Cesare and Juan, the Duke of Gandia, formed the second troop.

Juan separated himself from his comrades by the palace of Ascanio Sforza with a merry Addio, to pursue some small adventure.

He was fished from the Tiber the next day close by the outlet of the chief cloaca.

His swollen body revealed the stab of a dagger midway over the heart.

The Pope shut himself in his room, and here, where no one saw him, he gave his tears free course.

He wept for the first time in his life. Juan Borgia, the captain-general of the Church, future king of Naples,

of all Italy—extinguished like a torch in the sand. I will do penance, he cried, Lord, I deeply repent of my accursed life. Pour upon me Thy favor once more. I will reform Thy loved Church, I myself. I will—

He neither ate, drank, nor slept for three days; he burned with fever and meditated.

Cesare visited him the fourth day.

The Pope spoke harshly to him, snarling like a dog.

Who killed the Duke of Gandia?

Cesare did not answer.

Who plunged a dagger into Juan Borgia and flung him into the Tiber?

Cesare replied with a counterquestion:

Who forced me into a spiritual office, although I was the older and without doubt better suited than he for worldly honors, he who in the campaign against the Orsini covered himself with shame and ridicule? And who made me cardinal although the cardinal's hat suits me no better than a nightcap? Who is it that would make something of me which I am not?

Alexander drew near and laid both hands heavily upon his shoulders.

He meant to press them down, but did not succeed.

The small, slender man stood immovable.

The Pope sighed:

What shall I do with you now, hey?

Cesare shrugged his shoulders:

Will you spit in my soup? The spittle of the Borgias is in itself poison enough. You have no need to use the canterella.—

Alexander silently paced back and forth. After ten minutes he again stopped before Cesare.

The most unpleasant things are done to me. The death of the poveretto Giovanni has spoiled all my plans.

Cesare spoke quietly:

Make new plans.

Alexander screamed:

I loved him. Do you know that?

Cesare:

He is dead. God rest his soul—!

He made the sign of the cross.

The Pope struck down his hand.

Cesare continued:

He is dead. I am alive. Cast the love you had for him in with the love you have for me. Then I shall be happy. Love me! Father!

Alexander's countenance brightened:
You call me Father for the first time. Come to my breast. Son! Son!

The Pope permitted the Cardinal Cesare Borgia, who had indeed never been regularly consecrated to the priesthood, to lay aside the cardinal's purple.
Cesare threw the cardinal's cloak out of the window upon the street, where the rabble began to scuffle over it.
The cloak was in no time torn to a thousand pieces. They rent the cloak asunder, but had in mind him who had worn it.

[XXXV]

The Pope troubled himself no more in the future in regard to Vannozza.

She had presented him, as was her duty, with Borgias, and thereby fulfilled her mission.

When he learned one day that she was very ill with malaria, he sent to her his personal physician, Torella.

The latter gave her an injection, which had as a result that she fell into a profound and lasting sleep.

She slept thirteen years until her death. And awoke only for a few minutes each day and each night, when she was not more than half conscious.

She lost completely the power of speech and could finally recollect no more than a single word:

Borgia.

The Pope flourished a parchment in his hand.

Trionfo, Borgia! The new king of France begs me to dissolve his first marriage and permit him to enter

upon a second! I have consented—under one condition—

Cesare:

Do not keep me on the rack.

Alexander:

We have already done that with Savonarola. Joking aside, Cesare: under condition that you receive a French princess for wife.

Cesare ground his teeth with joy.

And he has consented?

The Pope was jubilant:

Indeed he has! He proposes Charlotte d'Albret, the sister of the king of Navarre.—My child, my dear son, proceeded Alexander Borgia, you must make a noble appearance in France. We need horses for you, traveling carriages, pages, runners, riders, velvet, silk, gold, brocade, pearls without measure!—

And where shall we get all this, which would amount to the sum of two to three hundred thousand gold ducats, smiled Cesare modestly.

My little son, my child, the Pope gently stroked his cheek, you must do something about your freckles, they disfigure your otherwise pretty face, yes—what

I was about to say—there are certain rich persons open to suspicion of heresy, as for instance Pedro de Aranda, bishop of Calahorro—if we do not bring them to trial they will gladly and willingly pay a small sum. And what are the Jews for? We will condemn them for wicked usury to severe punishment by imprisonment, which then they may redeem by money. Rest assured, little Son, we shall have the two hundred thousand ducats collected within a week. Besides, I will also establish a Borgia bank. A bank where for a fixed rate one can obtain indulgence. Murder, we will say, costs five hundred ducats, robbery, embezzlement, correspondingly less, and so on down to abortions and slander.

Cesare tried to be witty:

You yourself will have to put in working capital enough.

Alexander Borgia let the remark pass:

Twenty per cent of every payment will go directly to the Papal chamber; that means, to us. We shall be able in this way to put a good round sum into our chest, for sinners, praise God, will not die out.

Cesare smiled:

And not the fools.

Alexander snorted:

Amen.—Furthermore, what I wanted to say on this occasion:

A prince of Aragon, of Naples, cannot be of much more use to us since our recent successes. Lucrezia's marriage with him was a piece of folly. We must make that right again.

Alfonso was attacked one evening, as he was about to visit his wife in the Vatican, by masked figures, who set upon him with daggers.

He fled to Lucrezia's chamber, bleeding from his head, arms, and thighs, where she sank upon him in a swoon.

The Pope granted him absolution. But Alfonso recovered, contrary to expectation.

He was carefully and tenderly nursed by Lucrezia, who herself prepared all that he drank and first tasted all his food before she served it to him.

One afternoon Alfonso was standing in the mild evening sun—he was already convalescent—at an open

window and saw Cesare Borgia walking through the garden.

It grew red before his eyes. He tore his dagger from its belt and threw it at him.

The dagger fell to the ground in front of Cesare.

Cesare picked it up without looking toward the window. He regarded for a moment the crest of Aragon on the hilt.

He then threw it toward an olive tree, where it remained stuck in the trunk.

The same evening Cesare paid Alfonso a visit and inquired in friendly manner after his condition.

That night Michelotto, a creature of Cesare, gained access secretly to Alfonso's room and strangled him in his sleep.

Cesare played chess the same night with the Pope.

As he checkmated him with the queen, he said very casually:

The way for Lucrezia's marriage with Prince Este of Ferrara is free.

The Pope let fall the king, which he had drawn.

I am tired, he said, let us go to bed.

Lucrezia was beside herself when she heard of the murder of Alfonso. For the first time she lost faith in her own flesh and blood. Her lips refused to utter the name Borgia and she vomited green gall in her loathing of it.

She refused to receive Cesare, nor would she allow Alexander to enter her presence. She wanted to be alone and never see a Borgia again.

She covered all the mirrors in her room so that she need not look even upon herself. She hastened at night, heavily veiled, to the nunnery of San Sisto and pleaded to be admitted.

[XXXVI]

Cardinal la Grolaye had told Lucrezia of the young twenty-three-year-old sculptor of Florence, Michelangelo.

She begged him one day to come to her in the cloister. She regarded him with curiosity, as a child looks at Turks and Hindus.

You are a sculptor?

Yes, Madonna.

A nobleman?

Of the most noble family—

You are master of your craft?

I trust so, Madonna.

Do you make a living from your art?

I make an art of my living.

Can you create horses—or still better horse-men, centaurs? The fight between the centaurs and the Lapithæ?

I will try, Madonna.

A dying Adonis—

I will think about it—

Are you interested also in the unearthing of the antique? They are finding at every moment a beautiful statue, a goddess or a Silenus. You can learn much there—if you will.

My life consists of this, Madonna.

What have you already done that is good?

A group, Madonna.

What does it represent?

The Pietà—

You must show it to me!

I pray you, command me!

Lucrezia came to his studio accompanied by the Abbess of San Sisto. She was in a very good humor and nibbled dates incessantly.

She saw a centaur begun in clay.

It bore the features of Alexander Borgia.

She saw a dying Adonis.

He had the features of Alfonso of Aragon.

She turned toward Michelangelo with a melancholy smile:

And what do you want to make of me?

She stood suddenly before the *Pietà*. All her cheerfulness was shattered in a moment, the moment in which she changed places with the Pietà. This Pietà, this is not a Mater dolorosa aged with suffering—it is a young sorrowing woman, who resembles me—and Christ—does He not wear the features of that Fra Girolamo who was burned in Florence—that unfortunate heretic—

Aloud she said:

You knew Savonarola?

The sculptor nodded silently.

He is not dead, so it seems. He is only sleeping—

Yes, said Michelangelo, he is only sleeping.

O God, she thought, I shall have to weep. I feel the tears rising. I must go as quickly as possible.

But it was already too late.

The tears gushed from her eyes.

Michelangelo was in an ecstasy when she had gone from him. He threw aside his chisel and began to paint a number of passionately sensuous pictures:

Leda caressed by the swan.

Venus loved by Amor.

Leda and Venus bore the features of Lucrezia Borgia.

He began to write verses to the Donna aspera e bella.

And called her:

La donna mia nemica—

My lovely enemy.—

He dreamed of her nakedness.

And began to sketch a Christian picture in which the Virgin, the Savior, St. Peter, and St. John, all in heathen nakedness, were wandering through a Florentine landscape.

Lucrezia returned to the Vatican, the Pope having sent her an affectionate summons.

She told him of the sculptor Michelangelo.

The Pope considered.

He shall make me a sketch for my sepulcher. For a sepulcher that shall be destined to unite some day all the Borgias.

He sent Michelangelo to the quarries of Carrara to have suitable marble broken.

Michelangelo came upon a mountain on the coast visible afar from land and sea.

I will chisel from the mountain a colossal statue—why transport Carrara to Rome? The bodies of the Borgias must be brought from Rome to Carrara and rest beneath this colossal block of stone, to which I will give the form of a gigantic centaur.

[XXXVII]

The heavens arched above the Borgias without a cloud.

The sun shone solely upon the unrighteous.

Cesare Borgia married a French princess.

When she saw him on the wedding night for the first time without helmet and head band, she was filled with horror and almost fainted.

The Borgia bore upon his forehead unmistakable signs of the French disease.

Madam, smiled the Borgia, this mark upon my forehead comes from God and France. You will not blame me for it. I am willing at first to consummate my marriage with you merely in effigy.

And he seated himself upon the edge of the bed, took a lute, and began to sing Roman folk songs to Charlotte d'Albret, until she clapped her hands and laughingly joined in the refrain.

Cesare, who returned to Italy, never saw his wife again.

The French made an alliance with the Borgias.
The Colonna voluntarily submitted to them.
The Turks had invaded Italy after the death of Dschem and had fallen upon the Venetian ports.
The Pope preached a crusade, soon to conclude peace secretly with the Turks.
Cesare meanwhile, covered in the rear by the French king, was carrying on his campaign against the Italian cities and the princes of Central Italy.
One city after another submitted to him.
One prince after another fell upon the field or fled.
He was on the way to Italy's royal crown. On the way —to himself.
His watchword, engraved upon his sword, was: Aut Cesare aut nihil.

Cesare Borgia loved to go into battle dressed elegantly and correctly according to the latest fashion. He was dissatisfied with his tailor.
You dog of a Tuscan, botcher of clothing! he roared

at him, you spoiled for me the entire battle of Forlì. You put five glaring colors upon my body, so that I looked like a harlequin. Maybe you think a war like this is a carnival, do you?

The tailor pulled himself together for a reply:

War is not so very different. Only here blood flows, and in the carnival it is wine.

Spare me your highly figurative philosophy. You are not here to think but to cut out garments, and if you ever again offer me such a miserably botched costume as the last one was, I will use your own dull shears to cut off your nose and anything else which looks like it.—Hold your tongue! Take the measure; that is enough!

Cesare laid siege to the citadel of Forlì.

He inclosed therein Annabella Sforza.

Annabella Sforza had lost father, brother, husband, and lover through murder and poison. She wore a chain armor and an iron heart. She fought for her small son Ottaviano.

She stood upon the citadel wall and challenged Cesare

to single combat. She taunted him and threw stinging nettles into his face.

He desired her, but did not betray himself.

He had her informed that he was ready to engage in combat with her—in the olive grove before Forlì—but without witnesses.

She laughed; she was not afraid.

The next morning they met in the grove.

In the first passage he struck her sword from her hand, threw his sword in the grass by hers, embraced her and forced her to his will.

Thus she became his captive, body and soul.

Cesare played marbles with the small Ottaviano.

As he won one of the gayly colored glass balls, in which the universe turned like fire, the little boy screamed in anger and struck him with his clenched fist in the face.

Cesare rubbed his slightly reddened cheek: You are the only man who has ever caused Cesare Borgia to change color. I will give you back the glass ball. And later, when you are grown, even Forlì.—

Cesare was bent over a map of Italy. He traced the streams and mountain ranges with nervous fingers.

He pounced upon the individual cities—and his finger crooked itself like a vulture's beak.

Siena! Navarre! Genoa! Naples! Everywhere other people were in control.

He thought "other people," for at bottom there was only one set of people called upon to rule: the Borgias. The others, flatheads, hollow-brained, fat-bellied, shaking beanstalks—had merely to serve dumbly, obey in silence.

The Riarii of Imola and Forlì were brought low.

And straightway all the princes of Italy bowed before Cesare Borgia like ears of grain before the wind, Cesare Borgia, Duke of Valencia, banner bearer and Captain-general of the Roman Church.

Colonna and Orsini acknowledged allegiance and even the Este and Gonzaga bowed the knee.—

Cesare returned to Rome, for he needed money, money and again money, for his campaigns.

He marched into Rome as a conqueror, in the triumph of Cæsar.

He brought with him upon his chariot a beautiful

naked woman, who struggled like a fish in a net. It was Italia.

From the Loggia Beneficione the Pope gave his blessing to the entrance of his victorious son, and his right hand, raised in benediction, trembled with pride.

[XXXVIII]

Pesaro, Rimini, Imola, Forlì had fallen.

The Gonzaga and Este, although not vassals of the ecclesiastical state, strove for the favor of Cesare and Alexander. Cesare was now before Faenza. Faenza was the key to Ravenna and Venice.

The city defended itself heroically.

As the resistance of the men began to weaken, it was the seventeen-year-old Diamante Jovelli who spurred it up again.

She went about upon the walls, brought to this one a goblet of water, to that one a word of encouragement, dragging to them ammunition and fascines. Her example inspired the rest of the women, and after a week Diamante Jovelli was captain of a female battalion.

She had caused to be planted upon the ramparts a white banner, which displayed a girl in chain armor treading upon a death's-head.

What Diamante Jovelli did, the tanner's daughter with her raven locks and tender form, she did out of love to the eighteen-year-old Astorre Manfredi, Prince of Faenza, whose mother, Francesca, had caused her husband Galeotto Manfredi to be stabbed because of his unfaithfulness.

Cesare Borgia's artillery fired upon Faenza for seven hours a day. The balls of stone, sixty pounds in weight, clattered against ramparts and walls.

Those parts of the fortifications that were destroyed during the day were filled in again at night under the leadership of Diamante Jovelli.

A certain Leonardo da Vinci conducted the siege as Cesare's chief engineer, a very skillful inventor of various kinds of cannon and other projectile instruments, who before Faenza eagerly studied the flight of birds, because he was thinking of inventing a machine that should enable men to fly. In his leisure hours he painted pictures, which were judged very favorably by experts in the fine art of painting.

Cesare Borgia was making no advance. He offered the city of Faenza a treaty very advantageous to it and the princes.

Astorre Manfredi went at night unarmed to Cesare's headquarters.

Diamante Jovelli had sought in vain with tears to keep him from going:

You go to your destruction, Astorre; do you trust a Borgia's oath?

Astorre smiled his charming boyish smile:

He is a gentleman like myself. He will not break his word to one of his own equals.

Cesare was astonished when he saw Astorre in the light of the torches.

He was touched by such an emotion as when a moth brushed against his forehead.

He is the most beautiful youth I have ever seen. What firmness of step and grace of movement! What fire in the dark-blue sapphire eyes! How imperiously and yet at the same time how childishly he tosses back his blond hair upon his neck. And this high, intelligent brow!

Cesare agreed to everything that Astorre demanded: life and property would be guaranteed to every Faentine, the city would not be occupied by Cesare's troops.

Free conduct was granted Astorre's family, wherever they might wish to go.

Astorre returned home delighted.

That night Diamante Jovelli gave herself to him, for her heart was well-nigh bursting with joy when she saw him coming back, and when she finally held him in her arms.

Astorre Manfredi kissed her tenderly.

See now, one must have faith! The true nobleman pays back in the same coin.

Who is a "true nobleman"?

Cesare.—

The Borgia?

Yes.—

Her countenance darkened. She was about to say something, but remained silent when she looked into his shining eyes.

Cesare Borgia had invited the young Astorre Manfredi to visit him in Rome. Some weeks later Astorre accepted the invitation.

He dwelt in Cesare's palace and a rumor got about that an unnatural love bound the two. They were often seen wandering about the Pincio with their arms

about each other. Archery was among the amusements planned in Astorre's honor, in which a regrettable accident occurred.

A careless marksman missed his aim and the shaft struck the Prince of Faenza so unfortunately in the neck that a few hours later, the last holy sacraments having been administered to him, he gave up the ghost.

His last words were:

Borgia! Borgia!

which were interpreted to mean that he wished to thank the Pope, who himself had taken the trouble to perform extreme unction, for his goodness and kindness.

Carnival.

Thousands of masqueraders frolicked and swarmed upon the Campo di Fiori and by the Banchi like whirling gnats.

Harlequins, Columbines, Turks, negroes, soldiers, stilt walkers, peasant girls. Many, however, had put horrible, terrifying masks over their heads, as if for one day the evil demons in their souls had come to

light and acquired face and form. Many wore enormous phalli as noses. Pipers and trumpeters went about with their tirralirra. The drummers beat their drums skillfully, now softly, now mightily.

Alexander Borgia, the Pope, walking alone, came into their midst. They did not recognize him, but took him for some one who had disguised himself as Pope.

You fat thing, they cried, come and dance with us!

And they formed a circle, danced and sang in rhythm: vinum bonum, vinum bonum. And the Pope, laughing, danced with them until the ring broke up, the chain was dissolved, and Alexander Borgia remained alone upon the square.

He was warm.

The spring sun was scorching.

He dried the sweat from his brow with a small handkerchief.

And he was just about to tear off his peruke when he remembered that it was indeed real hair.

Yes, he snuffled, everything about the Borgias is real, everything real.

[XXXIX]

Niccolò Machiavelli, in origin from a family of the people, educated in Humanism, secretary of the Florentine "Council of Ten," is sent on an extraordinary mission to Cesare Borgia.

Florence, too weak to resist an attack of the prince that menaces them, is willing to make a peaceable agreement with him.—

Niccolò Machiavelli lived upon a small estate near Florence.

He arose early in the morning, hunted fieldfare, busied himself at wood-cutting in his small woodland, sat half the day at the inn in order to chat with the host, with the peasant Gismondo Buonarotti (a brother of the sculptor Michelangelo Buonarotti), with butchers, bakers, stable keepers, and brick burners, and to play cricca or backgammon.

He disputed with them over every quattrino and their

screaming could be heard for half a mile up and down the road.

When evening came, as soon as it was twilight, he stamped back home, took off his peasant's smock, and sat in his shirt at his desk reading Dante and Petrarch, Tibullus and Ovid.

He read Ovid's *Ars amandi* and thought with a sigh of his own earlier love affairs.

That time was over.

He had a wife and four children, and only now and then did a favorable wind blow a peasant girl or a servant maid into his preserves in his bit of woodland.

When he had had enough of Ovid, he closed his book, opened his portfolio, and pursued his studies "sul arte del stato"—concerning the "art of statesmanship."

He was scarcely able to manage his country estate, but his mind ruled as sovereign over republics and monarchies.

The mind of a shrewd, clear-sighted, keen-witted, incorruptible man: corruptible neither through gold nor through flattery, not to be influenced by sympathies or antipathies.

He was interested in "political science in itself," its methodology. Man was his only measure, for he makes politics and history.

What constituted the nature of man of lower degree?

He was stupid, cowardly, selfish, faithless—

What was the nature of a higher order of man?

He was clever, bold, selfish, and true to himself. His cleverness led him to make use of the stupidity of others, his boldness to overthrow their freedom, his faithfulness to himself might appear as faithlessness toward others. Foolish, he who kept his word with the perfidious; stupid, he who approached clever people stupidly; cowardly, he who shrank from assassination—if others had already prepared a poisonous draft or erected the gallows for him. The thing was this: to be the first, whether with a woman or in politics.

Early to bed—and early to rise—when others awake, half of the day's work must already be done.

He had by that time already caught seven fieldfares—and Cesare Borgia seven treacherous condottieri.

The Florentines knew what they were doing when they sent Machiavelli to Cesare Borgia. It was not the

first time that the country fellow with a statesman's soul had served them on important missions.

There occurred in Cesare Borgia's palace that remarkable, memorable interview between Cesare and Machiavelli which was to inspire the Florentine to his tractate concerning princes.

It was still very early in the day. The gray light of dawn still hung in the room. Cesare had begged Machiavelli to come for audience at six in the morning. For months the Borgia had not shown himself by daylight.

The disease had more and more wasted his face. It was covered over and over with suppurating pustules. The nose was corroded. Only his bright blue eyes sparkled, uninjured and imperious.

Be seated, said the Borgia. He placed his guest so that the face of the latter was in the light, while he himself remained in the dark.

Machiavelli seated himself in a deep chair, in which the small, stout man was almost completely lost.

Cesare laughed:

Yes, there you have at once an example of my politi-

cal method: I always compel my guests to sink far below me in a soft armchair. That makes them "subject" to me and pliant and yielding intellectually. I myself always sit upon a wooden chair, hard and high.

Machiavelli looked up from beneath, where he sat, and spoke toward the spot where he assumed the Borgia to be in the darkness.

I admire you, Excellency.

The Borgia inquired:

What is Florence doing? They are not particularly well disposed toward us there, His Holiness and me.

Machiavelli attempted to make a protesting movement of the hand.

Cesare continued:

They did not like to see me established in Umbria and Romagna and in accord with Louis XII. of France. I am reviled as being cruel. But this cruelty has kept Rome intact, while the leniency of the Florentines, everywhere extolled, has the destruction of Pistoia upon its conscience. Who is now actually the more cruel? My cruelty has caused the death of perhaps fifty persons in Romagna. But the forbear-

ance of the Florentines in Pistoia, two thousand! And he cited Virgil:

Res dura et regni novitas me talia cogunt
Moliri, et lati fines custode tueri.

Machiavelli:

Florence must strive to maintain herself as an autonomous state in the confusion of the present time, so long—

The Borgia:

Yes, so long—?

Machiavelli proceeded cautiously:

So long as the present times are not changed.

The Borgia laughed softly.

Ah, these times is an abstract concept. They will not change of themselves. We are called to change them. We men.

Yes, flattered Machiavelli, Men like *you*, you *great* men! You Borgias!

Cesare turned away for a moment in disgust:

Did Florence send you here to swing incense before me and offer me sweets as if to a dancing bear at the show? I abhor both.

The Council of Ten of Florence sends me to express its high regard—even though a chasm yawns between its political convictions and yours.

Borgia:

What sort of a chasm?

Machiavelli:

We Florentines are republicans.

The Borgia smiled:

I am not. I am a Borgia.

Machiavelli:

Whether republic, whether monarchy—good laws are the foundation of a state.

Cesare:

Good laws cannot exist without a good army.

Machiavelli:

A good army needs discipline more than anything else, therefore again—law.

Cesare:

A good army is made up of good soldiers. Good soldiers are really only children of the country; that means, men who love their native place, who go to war to defend their own soil, their industries, their wives and children.

Machiavelli:

But you have often employed mercenaries and foreign soldiers.—

Cesare:

Necessity compelled me. The ideal army is a national army. It was only for this reason that Charles VIII. of France could so rapidly overrun Italy, because our unbridled hosts of mercenaries and hirelings from all lands could not compete with his disciplined French army.

Machiavelli:

But how can a national army be established when there is no nation?

Cesare sprang up and now his livid face suddenly shone brilliantly in the morning light, which streamed in brightly:

You are right. Here lies the cardinal point in Italian politics. Italy must become a nation. That is the dearest purpose both of myself and my illustrious father. A unified Italy, one united Italian army.

Machiavelli courteously interrupted:

And *one* king?

Cesare was now standing at the window and looking

at a thrush that was dusting itself to take the morning dew from its feathers.

Exactly.—

Machiavelli inquired hesitatingly:

And who shall this king be?

Cesare:

A—a—he checked the thought—it is going to be a fine day—

Machiavelli arose:

A Borgia, Excellency, you wanted to say.

Cesare cut short the conversation with a crack of his riding whip, which he swung hissing through the air.

We shall see; when the time comes, counsel will come—

Machiavelli:

Borgia will come—

Cesare:

To Florence.

Machiavelli:

I have the honor of offering to Your Excellency an alliance with the city of Florence. She would count herself happy to obtain Your Excellency as condot-

tiere, as leader of troops; she extends to Your Excellency an annual sum of 36,000 gold ducats.

Cesare conducted the ambassador of the Florentine Republic to the inner door:

I beg you to lay before me in the name of the Signoria an outline of an agreement. I have very greatly enjoyed this talk with you; visit me again occasionally.

Machiavelli bowed deeply.

Machiavelli went through the early morning moved by the conversation.

He hastened without plan through the streets and ascended Monte Pincio to gaze upon the city of Rome in the brilliance of the new day.

He thought: A monster—if one will—and if one sees only one side of the medallion—but if one turns it over, a genius—a political genius like his father—they do everything solely for themselves, out of a fanatic sacro egoismo. Yet, behold, their ideas and deeds flow organically into the events of the great world.

He desires to have Italy united—for himself—that

he may be king—yet is not this the greatest and worthiest aim of the Italian of to-day?

His thoughts are sharp like Spanish blades.

Also, what his father does and plans—the hypertrophic overgrowth of power of the Holy See—is conceived only in the sense of the Borgias. Nevertheless, in time to come his successors will still reap advantages from the fact that he laid a firm political foundation for the Papacy in itself. What has become of the Orsini, the Colonna, who for generations have condemned the Pope to impotence in his own city?

No, these Borgias are not stupid; they are—they are—

and he sought for a word; then he heard a thrush.

They are geniuses of amorality. They know neither good nor bad.

They know only of what use a matter can be in so far as it affects themselves.

The centaur Chiron has been their instructor, half man, half beast, and they themselves have become centaurs.

Their nature is determined and their course illumined by the constellation Centaurus.

It takes four years for the light from Centaurus to reach the earth.

An eternity will be required to receive light and warmth from the Borgias.

They have encased their hearts in armor a hundredfold in thickness.—

He bent down to the earth.

Look! A flower of the Centaurea! What have the centaurs, the Borgias to do with this?—There is a variety of Centaurea the bitter root of which is used—as an antidote to poison.—

And he began to make notes upon some slips of paper, which he dug from his cloak:

The Borgias understand well how to make use of both natures, the human and the animal, for one does not long exist without the other. They know how to act as beasts and they take from fox and lion that which suits them. The form of the fox is necessary in order to learn the nature of snares; the lion's mask, to drive away the wolves. Any one who plays the part merely of the lion does not know his business.

[XL]

We ought to have a saint among us, a Saint Borgia. Do you know any? asked the Pope of his son Cesare, one day as he was leafing over the *Legenda aurea.*

Cesare laughed aloud, immediately restraining himself.

I beg pardon for my unseemly conduct. Form should always be observed—said the bell caster, but then it was too late and the bell was already spoiled. Yes—whom shall I recommend to you? Calixtus cuts no especial figure. The Duke of Gandia is dead, to be sure, but not to be made a saint. Lucrezia—would be a lovely saint—but she still lives. Just so with this boy Narcissus. Let us wait a few hundred years, Papa di Roma. When we Borgias have spent ourselves, we shall still bring forth a saint. And he will be just as holy as we have been unholy. For a Borgia does nothing by halves. Addio, Rodrigo.

He called his father Rodrigo only in moments of particular affection.

The Pope looked after him fondly:

A shrewd fellow, this Cesare.—

He rubbed his hands.

He shivered for the first time in his life.

I am growing old.

Outside it was June. The twenty-seventh of June, 1500.

He ordered a fire made in the fireplace.

It was a very old fireplace, at which Calixtus III. had already warmed his Borgia corpus.

When was that?

Let me see—something like fifty years ago—thought the Pope in astonishment.

That means fifty years since then!

He leaned against the chimney.

And suddenly it seemed to him as if the chimney were a fire-spewing crater.

The earth began to tremble.

With a thundering crash the chimney piece fell in ruins over him.

Lucrezia found him and screamed loudly for help.

Her tirewoman and some soldiers of the Swiss guards pulled him from under the débris. For the fraction of a second she entertained the wish that the old man there, her father, who had dragged her into this life—that he might be dead, absolutely and forever dead. But he was as hearty as a bear, as strong as a bull. The chimney had only scratched his skull. It had not been able to dash him to pieces.

Lucrezia nursed him.

He celebrated High Mass in the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo when he was well again.

He held in his still trembling hands a vessel filled with three hundred ducats and emptied it before the altar of the Virgin:

Three hundred, three—hun—dred ducats do I offer thee in gratitude for my recovery, most holy, most gracious Madonna, most chaste Virgin of all virgins!—

The ducats rolled down the steps of the altar.

That night he was overtaken suddenly with regret.

He started up from dreams, the more so as in the evening he had eaten a very indigestible lobster pie. Three hundred ducats! thought he. The Madonna

would have been satisfied even with two hundred. Or—a hundred and fifty. The perspiration stood on his forehead.

He rang.

But the officer of the Swiss guards who was on watch in the anteroom was asleep.

The Pope tied a knot in his bed covering and resolved to have brought back to him as soon as it was day two hundred ducats from the Santa Maria del Popolo.

As he tossed sleeplessly from one side to the other, he once more made a light, took up his notebook, and began to jot down all sorts of things:

My purpose is—to make the authority of the ecclesiastical state impregnable under my scepter.

If any of the princes sets himself against me, I will crush him. My enemies are ordained to destruction. I curse them with the Papal curse. Vide Charles VIII. and Fra Girolamo.

The Orsini and Colonna, my enemies here at Rome, will have in the other world an eternity in which to think of me.

The subjugation of the Este at Ferrara did not suc-

ceed? Good; Lucrezia shall marry an Este and we will win them in this way and in this manner make Borgias of them.

One has to play up men against one another: the Italian princes and cities against the foreign powers and vice versa. To be firmly established within, but not to tie oneself outwardly. That is politics. Cast the line where the water is clear, and fish where it is turbid. Promise everything, and keep as much as one must keep to one's own advantage. Suppose Italy does become poor thereby; we Borgias shall grow fat. Italy must be brought into disorder so that we may keep our order intact.

And he arose, stepped into his slippers, and shuffled down to the cellar, where he had had a cell arranged for himself as a treasure chamber.

No one might enter it. Not even Cesare and Lucrezia. The presses along the wall were filled with sacks of ducats, chests full of precious stones, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, golden vessels, crosses, figures. Altar furnishings, and Communion cups stood upon shelves. The Pope emptied a sack of ducats upon the table and wallowed in the coins.

The saliva dropped from his lips among them.
His eyes opened greedily like those of a hawk that spies a hare.
And in the voluptuous joy of possession and of avarice he consummated an obscene ecstasy.

Alexander summoned Leonardo da Vinci, the famous military engineer and inventor who was in Cesare's service, to come to him.
Leonardo, who was just then making fine strokes upon a pen-and-ink drawing, *The Hanged*, came very unwillingly.
The Borgia made himself understood:
Yes, now I know the earth,
mountains, valleys, cities, villages, men, women.
You prepared a globe for me: it stands upon my writing table,
and often my hand passes gently over the curved surface of the sphere,
as if it were a woman's breast.
All this
is tributary to me,
pays me reverence, honor, goods, and money:

Italians, Spaniards, and, as I hear, even Germans and Moors.

But now I will have the stars about me.

Build me a planetarium!

And when the planetarium was constructed, the Borgia sat among the heavenly bodies, amid Uranus, Neptune, Saturn, sun, moon, among planets and fixed stars.

He reached for them with his always rather sweaty hands, and they allowed themselves to be taken in the hand like scarcely fledged birds.

Then he would let them go again:

Fly, Sun!

Fly, Moon!

And they revolved in noble ellipses about his brow.

[XLI]

BEFORE Lucrezia journeyed away to Ferrara, she called the Roman Infant to her, he being now five years old.

She took leave of him with tears in her eyes.

I cannot take you with me, my dear child. I must leave you here with the Holy Father and the unholy brother, my Narcissus. They will guard and protect you, and an archangel will watch over you.

The boy looked up with great eyes at Madonna Lucrezia and could not understand why she wept.

I will never return to Rome. God keep you, if God may keep a Borgia. The Holy Father has this day at my request made you a duke and invested you with the fief of Nepi. Narcissus, Duke of Nepi. You do not yet comprehend all this and will not know until later what it all means.—Farewell, my little Duke!

She lifted the boy to her breast and kissed him warmly upon the mouth.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon when Lucrezia left Rome.

She rode upon a white horse. Her cloak, bordered with ermine, was of red silk and flowed in iridescent waves about her horse's flanks.

Her fair hair fluttered in the wind.

She had pulled off her riding hat and held it with the reins pressed against the horse's neck.

All the cardinals, many patricians, great numbers of the people, escorted her to the Porta del Popolo. Close to her at the left rode Cesare upon a dun-colored horse.

Before the gate he raised himself in his stirrups and extended to her his hand.

She did not take it, but only looked sorrowfully into his eyes.

He remained behind with the rest of the Romans, and for a long time he still saw her golden hair shimmering in the afternoon sun.

Like autumn gleams, he thought. The autumn gleams of the Borgias.

They point to the speedy coming of winter.

Twenty miles distant from Ferrara, before the citadel

Bentivoglio, Lucrezia met a hunter on horseback. He had hares hanging from his saddle, and she sent a request through a nobleman in her train that he might let her have a few hares for her evening meal.

The hunter most courteously expressed his willingness.

He lifted his hat.

They introduced themselves,

and it turned out that the hunter was Don Alfonso, hereditary prince of Ferrara, the man to whom she had been espoused in absentia. The husband and wife, taken by surprise, but then quickly controlling themselves, in order not to expose themselves in any way to the company, surveyed each other critically, for they had never yet seen each other.

Lucrezia had been forced upon the hereditary prince of Ferrara for political reasons.

Ten minutes of polite, superficial conversation sufficed and he was enchanted with Lucrezia, like every man before.

Lucrezia's entrance into Ferrara afforded one of the most splendid spectacles of that time.

Seventy-five mounted archers rode in advance, clothed in the colors of the house of Este, white and red. Following them came a hundred trumpeters and fifers. Behind them, quite alone, rode Don Alfonso, the bridegroom, in red velvet, a black velvet cap with a golden clasp upon his head, black velvet hose and black boots.

Then came the patricians of Ferrara, upon horses bedecked with costly bridles, then pages, Spanish grandees, bishops, the ambassadors of Rome.

Three court jesters belonging to Lucrezia somersaulted along the way at the head of a train of thirty dwarfs, who all were doing handsprings and performing other antics.

Next came ten beautiful picked pages dressed in the colors of the rainbow.

And then

Lucrezia,

the bride,

upon her favorite white horse.

She wore a smooth black velvet garment bordered with gold, over the gown a mantle of gold brocade. Her abundant fair hair was bound in a veil-like net

of thin gold, so that one could not distinguish the threads of hair and the threads of gold. A sun flamed above her forehead.

She rode under a purple baldachin, which was borne by the professors and doctors in ordinary of the University of Ferrara, since there was a lack of servants. The ambassador of France rode behind her by the side of Duke Ercole of Este. More princes, noblemen, and pages followed, and then, in fourteen gala coaches, the ladies of honor and court dames of the court of Ferrara.

Eighty-six mules, two white ones among them, carried the bride's wardrobe.

The gaping women of Ferrara marveled with many Ah's and Oh's at the costly garments, tapestries, objects of adornment.

But many a peasant and honest citizen stood by the way and thought:

These are the taxes and tribute duties which a Holy Church has extorted from us—for the Borgias.

There—there—upon the backs of the mules they are being brought hither, my "St. Peter's pennies" and yours. Pennies make gulden and gulden make

ducats, and many ducats make that wide-sleeved Camorra of green velvet or that chain of rubies and pearls wound five times round the neck of one white mule.

A red bull, the heraldic animal of the Borgias, walked also beside the white mules.

It was the butt of jokes and sneering remarks from the crowd, inasmuch as they dared not address these to the Borgia herself.

But it passed on, proud, unapproachable, with head low, so that it need not see or smell mankind, which it detested.

Lucrezia dismounted at the Cathedral Square, where rope dancers dancing between two church towers greeted her.

The rector of the University, Professor Niccolò Leoniceno, ordinarius in mathematics, an old near-sighted gentleman, held her stirrup for her.

Fifers, trumpeters, drummers, kettledrummers, trombonists, began to vie in sound with the church bells. Lucrezia, who hated all noise, at first drew down the

corners of her mouth, but then allowed a smile to play about her lips that charmed every one.

Lucrezia and Alfonso took their place in the reception hall upon the rose-strewn throne.

The bride, according to an ancient custom, might express a wish which should be immediately fulfilled.

Lucrezia begged that all the prisoners in the city of Ferrara might be set at liberty.

Spanish buffoons began to sing songs of welcome.

The poet Ariosto was the first to greet her as orator:

O Rome, O Rome bereft, in darkness plunged,
By Borgia's sun deserted, left to night.
Her light henceforth upon Ferrara shines,
Lucrezia, loveliest star, the chosen one,
To bring us flame and warmth and happiness—
Here now upon us pour thy kindling fire
That we may burn as torches, Queen, for thee!
And glowing spread our radiance up to thine,
Consumed to ashes still thy grace confess.

The young poet, twenty-seven years old, was unnaturally pale as he bowed and retired with awkward grandezza.

Lucrezia sent after him a soft glance—from her occhi bianchi—her bright blue eyes.

That very evening, back again in his solitary room, he wrote this line:

The woman is a dangerous big child; she has the eyes of the dove and the claws of the pantheress.

The court theater of Ferrara, in the hall of the Podestà, held three thousand persons.

It was filled to overflowing the evening of the performance in honor of the marriage of the hereditary prince.

All the actors appeared upon the platform and presented themselves most devotedly to the public before the performance began.

The director announced the piece that was to be played.

Ariosto had submitted to them his *Cassaria,* but it was rejected as too modern. The duke and the public wanted "the classical."

The performance started with the appearance of Plautus himself and with his expressing his very

great pleasure that one of his comedies was to be produced.

It was the *Epidicus.*

The greater part of the audience was bored and was enlivened only when they came to the ballets which were interpolated between the acts.

In these ten negroes danced with candles in their mouths. A gladiatorial struggle raged. There was especial applause for a fire-breathing dragon and a beautiful, nude maiden upon a unicorn.

At the close, however, appeared a clumsy legendary drama of the early Christian period concerning the hetæra Thaïs, which moved Lucrezia to her innermost being.

[XLII]

[THAÏS]

Market Place of Alexandria

(The pious Father Paphnutius appears.)

I have learned from this or that traveler that there dwells in Alexandria a maiden lovely and fascinating beyond description, so much so that all the young men of Alexandria have been swarming around her like bees about their queen and none has been able to escape her seductive charms.

(The young men present are at first silent with embarrassment. Then one of them speaks.)

Youth: You are right, virtuous old man, to reproach us young men of Alexandria with frivolity and sensuality. And we know whom you mean: it is Thaïs, the hetæra, who has bewitched us so that we are no longer masters of our senses. She has inflamed all Alexandria. Men leave their wives for her sake, and

beardless boys steal the jewels from their fathers' caskets in order to please Thaïs and adorn her forehead with a golden band.

Paphnutius: Where does she live? I have a message for her.

Youth: Her house is near by. In that street over there. If you wish we will conduct you, for we know the way all too well.

Paphnutius: I prefer to go alone. God be with you, young men.

Youths: God be with you, most worthy Father.

* * *

House of Thaïs

(The Devil in the form of a young man.)

Devil: Fill my glass, Thaïs. I am thirsty. When the red blood of the grape trickles down my throat, I imagine it to be human blood.

Thaïs: You make me shudder when you speak so wickedly.

Devil: I was joking, my sweet one.

Thaïs: These are evil jests, that you make.

Devil: Embrace me, then we will make better ones.

Thaïs: I am in no mood to-day for pleasantries of any sort.

Devil: Why so proper, my dovekin?

Thaïs: I had a dream last night, and this dream makes me thoughtful.

Devil: You make me smile, Thaïs. Do you believe in dreams? You allow yourself to be infected by the humor of your imaginations, created by yourself because perhaps the evening before you ate too much and too rich food or drank too eagerly. I had thought you were more clever than that.

Thaïs: I dreamed of a wood where I once dwelt when I was still good and happy.

Devil: Good—good—what does that mean? It is not a matter of being good, but of enjoying life, of drinking it in, as I gulp down this wine.

Thaïs: I have allowed myself to be enticed and led astray by you far too often and far too easily. My cheeks burn with shame when I consider that I gave my child, the fruit of our lascivious relations, to a filthy old woman in the outskirts of the city to be reared and cared for so that I need not be hindered

here at home in my harlotry and my wild career. How may my child be faring? I dreamed of it.

Devil: The child need not concern you. Be glad that it is not running around here under your feet and driving away all your visitors with its crying. Vestigia terrent. It would chill the desire of many a tender youth if he had so visibly before him the consequences of his heedless delight.

Thaïs: I dreamed that the wood tore itself from its roots and came walking like a man—to me.

(There is a knock at the door)

Thaïs: (shrinks with terror): Who is it?

Devil: I do not care to be disturbed.

A voice: A good friend, lovely Thaïs; open without fear.

(Thaïs opens the door; Paphnutius enters, the hood of his pilgrim's cloak thrown over his head, so that he is unrecognizable.)

Thaïs: Who are you? I breathe a pure clear air since you have come into the room. The fragrance of fir trees is about you. How strange I feel!

Devil: I cannot endure the smell. The fellow seems familiar to me. (Approaches, starts back.) It is the accursed Christian . . .

Paphnutius (makes the sign of the cross).

Devil (edging and cringing out at the door): Guard yourself, Thaïs, from him—if you would remain true to me . . . from me, if you yield to his power.

Paphnutius: Who is the man who has just left you, beautiful Thaïs?

Thaïs: A young man of Alexandria and my friend.—You are a stranger here, as it seems?

Paphnutius: I have come from afar, through the desert, from the groves of Thebes.

Thaïs: My dream!

Paphnutius: O Thaïs, Thaïs, what toilsome ways and long have I wandered to come to you!

Thaïs: You have wanted—me—and yet have never known me.

Paphnutius: All the paths of the world are full of the report of your beauty.

Thaïs: Because you evince such longing toward me, I will no longer conceal my face from you, but will disclose it. (She does so.)

Paphnutius: Thaïs, Thaïs—

Thaïs: Do you also remove the cloak from your head that I may discover with whom I am speaking. Whether it is a youth or an old man who craves my love.

(Paphnutius clasps his heart.)

Thaïs: What is the matter? You are trembling?

Paphnutius: I shudder because I am thinking of your lot, and I mourn your destruction.

Thaïs: What voice . . . The tears of a stranger touch my inmost heart . . . You do not know my lot. Why do you weep, Stranger, for one you do not know? I am a stranger to you. You are a stranger to me. An hour ago you did not know me and I knew nothing of you.

Paphnutius: I have been ever with you, Thaïs, in the strength of my prayers. You have left me—I have never forsaken you.

Thaïs: I have not prayed for years. I have almost forgotten the name of God.

Paphnutius: You have named Him. Yet tell me, of what God did you speak?

Thaïs: Of the One God.

Paphnutius: So you do believe in Him?

Thaïs (with head cast down): I believe in Him.

Paphnutius: Then you believe also that He is omniscient?

Thaïs: My life is not hidden from Him.

Paphnutius: And you believe that He judges in righteousness and justice?

Thaïs: I believe that He weighs our deeds in the scales of justice. . . .

Paphnutius: O Jesus Christ, what infinite patience dost Thou show in Thine unspeakable mercy and long-suffering, and Thou dost reveal the way of repentance even to the deepest outcast. (To himself) The covering from my head.

Thaïs (cries out): My holy Father . . .

Paphnutius: You have suffered, Daughter?

Thaïs: Sorrow upon sorrow.

Paphnutius: Who has deceived you, beguiled you, and led you astray?

Thaïs: He who deceived Adam and Eve that they were driven from Paradise.

Paphnutius: Where is the life of angelic purity which you led?

Thaïs: Gone, gone.

Paphnutius: Where is your virginity? Your modesty and goodness? What has become of your golden chastity?

Thaïs: Vanished before my senses.

Paphnutius: Did ever a human being live without sin, except the Virgin's Son?

Thaïs: Never.

Paphnutius: It is human to commit sin. But it is of the Devil to continue in sin. Do you repent?

Thaïs (kneeling): Woe is me, miserable one. I repent.

Paphnutius: In words? With the lips?

Thaïs: In deed. With the soul. With my whole being. I will atone. I will atone. I am not worthy to kiss the dust from thy feet.

Paphnutius: Rise, my daughter. It is never too late to turn.

Thaïs: I am oppressed with the burden of my guilt.

Paphnutius: Lift yourself. In the name of the Triune God, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, I absolve thee from all thy sins. Stand up, my daughter, and walk in the Lord.

Thaïs: Might it please the Lord to change me once more into a worthy child of God and man.

Paphnutius: Unchangeable is the substance of the Most High. Yet it is to Him a slight thing to alter ours. Be comforted and believe!

[XLIII]

THAT very same night—the bridal pair had long since sought their couch and a notary had established the fact of the consummation—the Duke Ercole of Ferrara wrote a letter to the Pope in Rome:

Most Holy Father and Most Worthy Lord, the most illustrious daughter of Your Holiness has arrived happily in Ferrara. She has consummated marriage with my son and has taken by storm the hearts of the men and women of Ferrara, not easy to be won, through her charm, her grace, her virtue, and her intelligence. Let Your Holiness rest assured that my son and I will cherish her as the most precious possession we have upon earth.

When the Pope held this letter in his hands, his eyes lighted, to be suffused immediately with a shimmering moisture.

Suddenly tear after tear dropped upon the writing.

Rodrigo Borgia wept for the second time in his life.

My child, he sobbed, my best-beloved child! You are happy! I am happy if you are! My Borgia heart! Be happy even upon earth! I have done everything to procure you this happiness. I have laid carpets at your feet, that you need not walk upon stones. I have shielded you from cold and from heat, you cool and noble Stone. O bionda, mia bionda, biondinella d'amor!—

The Pope released Ferrara from tribute to the Church, which meant an exemption of two hundred thousand gold ducats, and assured the Duke of Ferrara of his especial favor.

Cesare received this letter from Alexander:

My dear Son, I follow with constant attention all your undertakings. If they have not always turned out well for you of late, you must not for this reason allow yourself to be downcast. Try once to cast down the spirits of others. There is no question, we must make an end of this accursed family of the Orsini, which is chiefly responsible for your recent misfortunes. They have been our enemies from the beginning of the world and even before it, and they

will be again when it has passed. We shall meet them again in heaven or in hell. The condottiere Paolo Orsini, together with his nephew Fabio Orsini and Vitelozzo and Oliveretto, has betrayed you most shamefully. You must attempt to seize them all through cunning. I will at the same time in an affectionate letter prevail upon Carlo Orsini and the Cardinal Giovanni Battisti Orsini, who have left Rome from fear of me, to return. When we have them all in our hand, we will close the hand, and they may all choke and perish together.

Henbane, belladonna, water hemlock, digitalis, witches' root, are useful plants; and arsenic, lead acetate, and mercury are minerals worth looking into. I have no opinion of a Venenum atterminatum.

God's blessing be upon you!

Your old father, who loves you.

P.S. Lucrezia is well. Cardinal Giovanni Borgia can no longer discharge his official duties, having malum gallicum. I have always warned him against this Neapolitan Sciantosa.

Cardinal Giovanni Battisti Orsini accepted the Pope's

kind invitation. He had the more definite hope of being received and restored to full favor inasmuch as Paolo Orsini had again placed himself at the disposal of Cesare Borgia and had taken Sinigaglia for him by storm.

He believed himself to be the bearer of a message most acceptable to the Pope as he rode into the Vatican upon a white mule. He was torn from his mule, without having come into the presence of the Pope, and dragged by armed men into the Castle of Sant' Angelo.

It was the same day in which Cesare Borgia lured the condottiere Paolo, and Fabio Orsini, Vitellozzo, and Oliveretto into the trap and had them strangled on the spot.

Scarcely had Cardinal Orsini's mother learned of his imprisonment than she begged audience of the Pope. The audience was refused her. But the Holy Father out of pure humanity permitted her to visit her undutiful son once a day.

He added that she might also, if she wished, bring him personally his midday meal. The cardinal had manifested a distrust (unfounded) of the Vatican

cookery. It was perhaps too simple and not highly enough seasoned for his pampered taste—the taste of the Orsini. Besides, he understood this: even his son Cesare and the young cardinals ate unwillingly at the frugal Papal table.

Every day at noon Madonna Orsini, the most distinguished woman of the Roman aristocracy, carried his food with her own hands to her son Giovanni in prison. She passed it to him through the bars, where he sat upon his bed of boards reading from a breve or playing chess by himself.

Giovanni, she implored, what is your guilt?

The cardinal looked into her eyes:

That I am an Orsini, Mother.

One day the jailer took the dish from Madonna Orsini at the gate and emptied the minestra into the gutter:

Your son, Motherkin, has no more need of food. He quietly passed away last night from a digestive complaint. The Pope himself administered the Sacred Host to him last evening—but it did not agree with him.

He wanted to give her back her dish.

It fell from her hands upon the paving stones and broke with a crash. She ran screaming through the empty midday streets.

The shades and blinds were down at all the windows. The heat of the sun was almost unbearable.

No one saw, no one heard, the aged woman robed in black.

She stumbled hither and thither in the glaring sun like a butterfly, the Antiopa, called mourning-cloak.

[XLIV]

All the Orsini in Rome and the surrounding region arose against the Pope upon the news of the death of Cardinal Giovanni Battisti Orsini.

Giulio Orsini set forth from Ceri with a detachment of troops, Giovanni Giordano Orsini from Bracciano.

Cesare returned to Rome by a forced march to aid his father.

He succeeded once more in inflicting upon the Orsini a decisive and humiliating defeat.

Cesare's victory led the French king, Louis XII., to obtain the support of Cesare and his army for the re-conquest of Naples.

The funds needed for the campaign were provided by the Pope, who appointed new cardinals, each of whom had to pay 15,000 to 20,000 ducats for his cardinal's hat.

Furthermore, the Pope and Cesare invited themselves as guests of the fabulously rich Cardinal Adriano. It must be a pleasure to be his heir.

The Pope, otherwise but little in sympathy with culinary delights, took a vital interest in the menu.

He went himself into the cardinal's kitchen. He tied on an apron and was observed busy in the preparation of a pheasant. The pheasant was cleaned, the Pope carefully removed the skin from the breast. Then he chopped together a quarter of a pound of larding bacon, a truffle, fifty grams of pork, and stuffed the mixture between the breast and skin. Now he wrapped the entire pheasant in bacon.

The cardinal had ordered a delicate meal to be prepared: fresh asparagus, slices of trout in brown butter with crab patties, pheasant upon snipe croutons, salad with cream dressing, pineapple in currant jam, and hot cheese cake.

The Pope, who because of his stinginess set a frugal table at the Vatican, applied himself eagerly to the viands.

He and Cesare were in a gay mood. Things were going excellently with the Borgias, ever forward, ever further, sometimes only as in a dancing procession, two steps backward, then three forward; God was with

them, the Devil, and Fortuna, the goddess of good luck.

The Pope actually was considering whether he should not erect a temple or at least an altar to the heathen goddess Fortuna and whether one could not make of her a Catholic saint, when Cesare arose for a toast.

He took the glasses from the cupbearer standing behind him, with whom he exchanged a rapid glance of understanding, handed one to the Pope, one to the cardinal, took one himself, flourished his glass and spoke, turning to the cardinal:

To the health of Your Eminence!

All drained their glasses to the bottom.

Hardly had they drunk, when the Pope and Cesare were seized with severe vomiting.

They had to be brought back to the Vatican with all speed.

The cupbearer, a creature of Cesare, had exchanged the goblets.

Diamante Jovelli, the tanner's young daughter of Faenza, the beloved of Astorre Manfredi, had prevailed upon him to do it through the promise of a night of love.

[XLV]

Alexander attempted the next morning still to read Mass. His head fell sideways upon the shoulder of a cardinal, who was supporting him.—

Alexander writhed in his bed with pain.

He had a burning sensation which passed from his larynx through the œsophagus to his stomach.

His skin began to scale.

Pustules appeared.

He vomited greenish yellow gall.

He had his physician inject into him the blood of a young man, who died of hemorrhage.

Nothing helped.

Poison—he thought—he has poisoned me—

he himself, Cesare, my dear child, my own son—

has poisoned me—

or—who else?

Cesare shall come to me!

The servant brought back word that the duke lay very ill himself.

The Pope reflected:

He is lying, he is simulating.

The fever spread over him in rose-colored, then in fiery-red, clouds.

Suddenly death entered the room through the red mist, clothed in a long black cloak with a stiff white ruff, half like a doctor, half like a judge.

The Pope started from his pillow:

Quid mors seva petis?

Death spoke:

Te.

Me—quis jure?

Quod hora en properat.

Heu mihi—

Quid luges?

Parum vixisse.

Lucrezia—Cesare—he had suddenly forgotten them. Where was Julia? Julia me miserum non defendis: amavi si te corde magis. Julia, I have had you painted as Madonna by Pinturicchio—I myself absorbed in

adoration before you. So now help me, Madonna Julia!

Nemo potest te juvare.

Ergo mihi moriendum est?

Est.

I will confess to you.—

Stop, you would need a new, a second life in which to confess. I have not time enough. Confess to the Devil.—

A woman, shrieked the Pope, as he awoke from long faintness, a woman will make me well!

The Pope's heart ceased beating as he lay next a woman in the mirror room.

The mirrors reflected back into the room a hundredfold his last living glance.

His last mistress fled screaming, a young washerwoman, whose mother had brought her to him.

The powerful body of the gigantic old man would not die. Even when his soul had left him, the mouth still foamed like a kettle over the fire, and the belly swelled mightily.

His feet twitched, also, as if they would set forth to tread this earth once more.

No one ventured near his couch for good or for evil so long as there was still uncertainty whether he was yet alive and might rise up again.

But once the physicians had irrevocably testified to his death, all restraint was gone.

[XLVI]

The people of Rome were wild with joy and masqueraders reveled in the streets as in carnival.
Word of the death of the "Antichrist" went through the Holy City on the wings of the wind.
The people ran out upon the streets.
Utter strangers embraced one another.
Mothers brought their children into the sun:
It is pure once more, the light, since it no longer shines upon that monster.
The people broke in mobs into the dwellings of the various Borgias and plundered them.
The rabble of Rome were drunk with Chianti and with joy at the Pope's decease.
They got up a merry funeral procession.
A stuck pig, which symbolized the Borgia's corpse, was carried along in an open coffin, wreathed with paper garlands, by two Jews and two hinnies.

The mourners followed howling, clucking, squeaking, bellowing: beggars, chestnut venders, retired mercenaries, harlots, brick makers, astrologers, musicians, vagabonds, pilgrims to Rome.

A leper also took part in the procession, bearing the name Cesare Borgia inscribed on the forehead, and a beautiful blonde whore with the name of Lucrezia Borgia.

A sort of goddess of peace was borne along in a hand cart, a half-naked woman waving a lily in her hand and with her unwashed foot standing upon rusty armor, halberds, and helmets.

The police force of the city closed both eyes and permitted the mob their revels.

Thousands passed by the body of Alexander Borgia, unhindered by the Swiss halberdiers: clericals, peasants, hirelings, laborers, citizens, who manifested their hatred without concealment. Indeed, when the Swiss guards were not looking, one or another spit in his face, where the mucus had sealed his eyes forever. There was not a single woman, however, in the throng that filed past his remains. The women had loved him and did not want to profane the memory

of the beautiful, well-formed man by the sight of the misshapen corpse.

Julia Farnese learned of his death while she was sitting in the bath. She fainted and would have drowned had not her maid, a young Moor, by chance come to look for her.

She allowed herself to be sprinkled with Cologne water and sat motionless the whole day in the oriel window. The people rollicked by underneath, and now and then some one mockingly threw her a kiss.

The Devil has taken him, cried a shoemaker from St. Peter's Place. He had made a pact with him, which brought him to the Papal See: twelve years and four days he was to be Pope—then his filthy soul belonged to him, Beelzebub, so ran the agreement. Yesterday his time was up. A pack of black dogs has been howling in the corridors of the Vatican since day before yesterday. These were the chief Devil and twelve lesser devils.

The poet Ariosto also went by the bier of Alexander Borgia. Some one had fastened to it a slip of paper. Ariosto read:

Quis jacet hic?

Sextus.

Quis funera plangit?

Erynnis.

Quis comes in tanto funere obit?

Vitium.

He stood still and for a long time regarded the unshapely Colossus, whether he might entice his secret from him.

In vain, he sighed, it is in vain.

Perhaps, he meditated, he will burn in purgatory. But the fire cannot hurt him, for it is his element. Remorse? No, he did not know remorse. He will not repent even in purgatory, and when sometime we shall have to go below he will still be burning—and for thousands of generations more, until, it may be, some day or night God the Lord will grant him release and set him as a star in the firmament of heaven. There he may burn on and purge himself by fire for service in light and heat.

That is the only repentance we may expect from him.

And he laid a white rose between the puffed-out lips of the dead Borgia.

The white rose which Lucrezia had intrusted to him.

No priest gave his benediction to the burial.

No litany was sung.

The grave diggers had difficulty in putting the swollen corpse of Alexander Borgia into the coffin. They stuffed in the masses of flesh with coarse fists like goose filling into a drawn goose.

[XLVII]

It became evident that Cesare's dominion also had been held together solely by the authority of the Papal Father.

One piece after another was broken from Cesare's crown.

The princes who had been driven out by Cesare returned to their capitals amid the rejoicings of their inhabitants: Sforza to Pesaro, Guidobaldo to Urbino, Varano to Camerino—and so on.

Cesare was still in bed seriously ill, crippled and impeded in every resolution and deed. Machiavelli visited the sick man.

I had taken everything into consideration, groaned Cesare, except that at the moment when my father died I should be lying grievously ill—that I had never thought. I am weak, I am absolutely helpless.—

Only Romagna still remained loyal to him.

In Ferrara, Lucrezia trembled for Cesare.

Her position, through her beauty, intelligence, and prudence, was inviolable. She succeeded in getting the duke to send troops to Cesare so that Romagna could be preserved for him.—

Piccolomini was elected Pope as Pius III.

Cesare was jubilant. Piccolomini was well disposed toward him. Cesare had bribed certain cardinals in his favor.

Pius III. died at the end of three weeks.

Cesare was prostrated.

The end of the Borgias had come. Success was no longer theirs. Fortuna, who had smiled upon them for fifty years, turned away her face. From whatever source they had come, out of the darkness, out of the void, thither they returned, into the void, into the dark.

Cesare rode through the city to seek out his own grave. He was having fever constantly. Yet he did not take the medicine that his doctor prescribed. He poured it under the bed.

Whom would they choose as Pope?

He cursed himself that he had once so light-heartedly laid aside the cardinal's purple.

To-day he might have made use of it.

Perhaps Rovere would still be the most serviceable Pope for the Borgias?

He procured for him the votes of the Spanish cardinals.

Rovere placed the tiara upon his head as Julius II.

Julius II. spoke:

I will not dwell in the rooms inhabited by the Borgia, who has brought more disgrace upon the holy authority of the Church than any one before. He occupied the Papal Throne unlawfully, having usurped it with the aid of the Devil. And I forbid under penalty that the name Borgia shall in the future be heard in Rome. Let his name be stricken out, blotted out, forgotten. All paintings of the Borgias must be covered with black cloth. All tombstones of the Borgias shall be turned about, the inscriptions chiseled away.

Julius II. demanded of Cesare Borgia the surrender of the fortified places in the Romagna. Cesare saw that resistance was useless. He fled. In Ostia he boarded a sailboat.

When he landed in Naples, he was arrested and thrown into the stronghold of Ischia.

He escaped and succeeded in reaching Spain.

In rags as a common sailor, he trod the Spanish earth, the earth which had brought forth him and all the Borgias.

Julius II. had given orders for the confiscation of his possessions.

He was arrested again in a low den in Sevilla, where he was engaged in forbidden gambling with all sorts of questionable characters, and brought to the castle Medina del Campo. He petitioned the king of France for help.

There was no response.

He wrote to Lucrezia.

The letter was intercepted.

He did not know that in the meantime she had become Duchess of Ferrara.

Ercole was dead and Alfonso had ascended the throne.

Cesare succeeded once more in making his escape.—

He bore in his heart a deadly hatred toward Julius II.

Hate is a good thing, he thought. But it should not be based upon feeling. It must be a systematic hatred, a

rational, mathematic hatred. I hate Julius too passionately.

His flight was reported in Italy and set the Pope in terror:

A fearful man, this Cesare Borgia.

We may expect him to dare the boldest measures.

His name alone is sufficient to raise armies.

There is a mystic force that continues to emanate from him.—

He resolved to put a check upon him.

Cesare fell near Pamplona, attacked by ambush, at the age of thirty-one, a victim of the daggers of assassins.

Seven of them had come upon him.

He wounded six of them fatally before the seventh gave him the final death thrust.

The seventh was a Moor. He regarded his dead foe with respect.

Brave man, brave man! But it is well that he is dead and I still live.

A thousand ducats were beckoning him and a return to Africa to his swarthy spouse.

He licked his thick lips with desire as he wiped the bloody weapon on the Borgia's clothing.

[XLVIII]

LUCREZIA received the news of her brother's death, which they had tried to keep from her, when she was in labor.

She cried out once to Heaven,

and then uttered no further complaint.

She was delivered of a dead son.

The life of the Borgias is at an end, was her thought.

The thread is severed for them for all time.

I, too, am weary and sated with this life.

She wrote one last letter, while her life was flickering out in childbed fever,

to the Pope at Rome:

Most Holy Father and Lord, to whom deepest reverence is due,

the soul of a dying woman bows in homage before you and kisses your sacred feet in all the reverence which is due you. This dying one is a sinner and a Borgia—and therefore a sinner twofold and manifold.

Every sin and evil in this world has been committed in my wretched and miserable body—now, wholly exhausted as I am from childbirth, they have perhaps all flowed from me with my blood. Oh, have mercy and pray God for grace for me and all the Borgias. They were endowed with the highest gifts of mind and body. They were destined to lead the world. But they allowed themselves to be led by devils and demons. Their souls were not petty and directed to trivial things. History will remember them, in admiration and horror, but not without recognition of their destiny and their talents. Oh, grant me the holy benediction, Most Holy Father—I am your true and humble child, the last and most insignificant branch from the tree of the Borgias, doomed to wither and perish.

Written in Ferrara, in the last hour but one of my life among mankind.

Your Holiness's

lowliest handmaid,

Lucrezia Borgia.

Twilight in the room.

Lucrezia is dreaming of the tale of the withered

almond tree, which under the gaze of a pure person begins to blossom again.

She blooms.

She acquires a fresh virginity and chastity of nature. Every one who sees her is struck by so much grace and charm and such humility of soul.

She enkindles the poets, who dedicate to her verses full of passion and reverence. Ariosto, Giraldi, Antonio Tebaldeo, Marcello Filosseno compare her with Minerva, Helen, and Venus.

She becomes the model of a true and virtuous wife. Michelangelo places her upon a pedestal and carves her as the Pietà.

All lust and sin have long since passed from her. She rises like Anadyomene newborn out of the sea of life.

She has burned all the letters of her father and brother—even her costly garments of an earlier time.

She wears a simple gray frock.

She lives in the past.

She remembers suddenly:

That time when Alexander—

That time when Cesare—

That time when Alfonso—

The Borgias come forth from their graves.

Many of them bear a dagger in the breast,

many have their head under their arm.

She dances a Spanish dance in their honor.

A monk beats for her the tambourine of the moon.

The dead Borgias look on.

She dances until she sinks in a swoon.

When she awoke the room had grown dark.

The darkness disgorged specters.

Specters within her—

Specters without—

A sulphurous flame from heaven struck her heart.

A small hunchbacked man was suddenly frisking about before her; and it was repugnant to her to see that he did not walk but, affected and officious, exaggerating his posteriors, he reeled and capered about.

All at once he disappeared in the wall, as if there were a door there.

But there was no door.

Only a tiny hole, in which sat a toad staring at Lucrezia with golden-brown eyes.

The sun had set long since, wrapped in a violet mantle of clouds.
The stars began to shine forth.
It grew light,
ever lighter.
There is a roaring about her and a humming of light.
A radiant stream.
She smiles.
Her smile congeals,
it turns to horror.
The radiance begins to burn. Every pore of her body is afire.
It becomes hot, ever hotter,
she is in purgatory.

This inscription was found upon her tomb, legible for three days, until the rain washed it away:
Here lies Lucrezia—such was her name.
Horror piled she on horror, shame upon shame;
Wife to her father, daughter-in-law, too,
As whore to her brother, while her husband she slew.

[EPILOGUE]

Luis was the father of Rodrigo
Rodrigo was the father of Pedro
Pedro was the father of Alfonso
Alfonso was the father of Juan.

Juan Borgia was grand master of the hunt and grand master of the horse at the court of Charles V.

He loved Isabella, Queen of Spain, and when she died, he accompanied her coffin to Granada to have it placed in the royal tomb.

The coffin was opened once more, according to an ancient custom, and Juan Borgia drew near it to attest by oath that the body that lay in it was that of the beautiful and noble Queen Isabella.

He raised his hand—but his hand remained hanging motionless in the air.

This piece of flesh, already decayed beyond recognition, was Isabella, the lovely Isabella, the marvelous woman?

He refused to swear his oath and his clenched fist appeared to curse God.

He rushed away and came to the castle of Tordecillas.

He met a demented old woman, who danced before him in ghastly fashion the tarantella.

It was Giovanna, the mother of Charles V.

He flees and in Jarandilla comes upon Charles V., who, filled with disgust, has abdicated his throne.

Then Juan Borgia goes to the Jesuits and in the year 1565 becomes their general.

He was canonized by the Curia after his death as the best of the Borgias, that the curse and shame might be removed from the Borgias' name.

San Francesco Borgia!

Poor Saint—who calls upon thee in his need, who dedicates to thee waxen hearts and candles? Who bears thy medallion upon his breast?

No one calls upon thee.

No one prays to thee.

Thou standest alone, apart from all the other saints, at the throne of God.

A tear gleams in thy seraphic eyes when thou hearest

the songs and hymns which resound to the glory of the other saints.

Poveretto Borgia!

Thou barest a name so black that not even the grace of God can scour it white.

Thou Borgia!

This was for a long time a curse word like viper, scoundrel, and even a murderer could not with impunity be called Borgia.

One day San Francesco Borgia drew near to God and prayed:

Remove from me the halo which Thy Holy Church has put upon me. There is no one who believes in it. Neither men nor Thine angels. Let me go to the devils in hell, there where the Borgias belong.

And God, beholding the solemn earnestness in the countenance of the saint, sighed deeply, and said:

Go—go to thine own.

And the Borgia bowed, drew off the uniform of the general of the Jesuits, and went slowly down the nine hundred and ninety-nine steps to hell.

He knocked at the gate of hell. Lucifer opened in person.

Who are you?

A Borgia!

The Devil's face lighted up:

Ah, very good. Ninety and nine Borgias are already within. You will make the hundredth. You are welcome! Pay your entrance fee and you may come in!

The Borgia was amazed:

The entrance fee? How much?

Since it is you, a thousand ducats!

The Borgia:

I do not possess a thousand ducats.

The Devil:

Well, let us say five hundred!

The Borgia:

I have not even five hundred.

The Devil:

For Heaven's sake, how much have you then?

The Borgia:

Not a penny.—

The Devil flew into a rage:

What, you, a Borgia, have no money? You lie. You are only a filthy miser, or you have invested your money in heaven because God the Lord has promised

you a higher interest rate. Your illustrious relatives entered here with hundreds of thousands of ducats. When Alexander Borgia came, my devils who serve me were eight days dragging in the chests with gold. Betake yourself to heaven if you cannot or will not pay the toll into hell. And he slammed the gate of hell in his face.

Between heaven and hell, unable to find a home,
he wanders ceaselessly
the last Borgia.

[APPENDIX]

Translation of Passages

PAGE 153 LINE 8

I separate thee from the Church militant, not triumphant!

. . . . . .

From the militant, but not from the triumphant, for the latter is not thine!

PAGE 155 LINE 2

Let me die!
and what wouldst Thou
that may comfort me
in this hard lot,
in such sore distress?
Oh, let me die!

PAGE 191 LINE 3

The hardness of conditions and the newness of my reign compel me to such things and to set a guard on my broad borders.

PAGE 224

Bionda=yellow flower (variety of Centaurea).

PAGE 233 LINE 11

What seekest thou, Death?
Thee.
Me—by what right?
Because thine hour cometh on apace.

Ah me—
What dost thou deplore?
Not having lived long enough.
. . . . . .
. . . Julia, thou protectest me not in my trouble:
I have loved thee with such great love . . .
No one can help you.
Therefore I must die?
Yes.

PAGE 238 LINE 23

Who lies here?
Sextus.
Who mourns his loss?
The Erinyes.
What companion shares in so great a death?
Sin.

DISCARDED